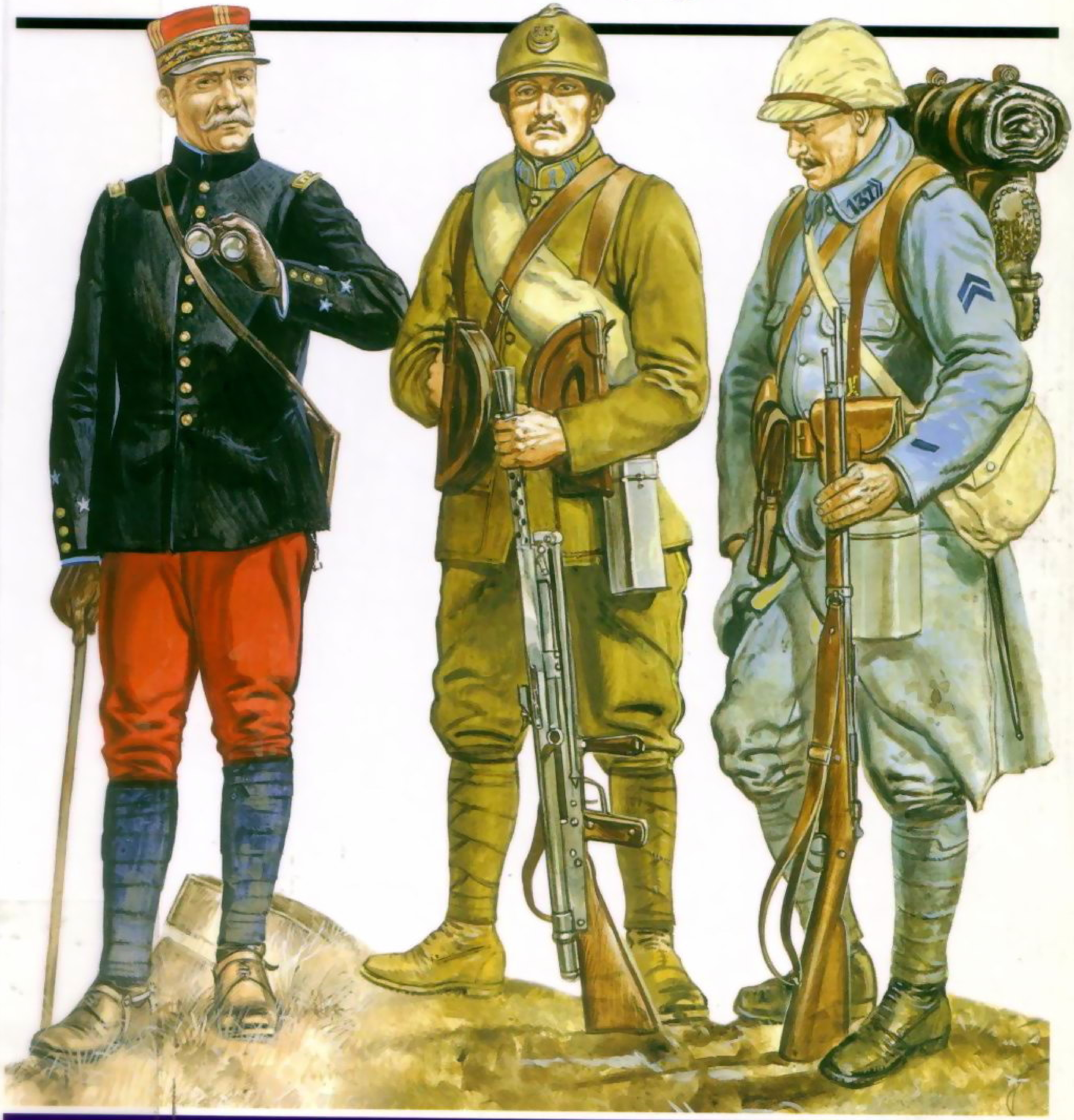
OSPREY
MILITARY

MEN-AT-ARMS SERIES 286

THE FRENCH ARMY
1914-18



IAN SUMNER GERRY EMBLETON

THE ORGANISATION OF THE ARMY

In common with all other contemporary armies, the French Army of World War I was organised into divisions for tactical purposes. The divisions were, in a sense, the building blocks used by the strategists to make their plans. The divisions in turn were assembled into army corps, then armies and groups of armies but the composition of these higher formations would vary from time to time whereas the divisions would have an identity, with regiments usually allocated to them for a considerable period of time.

Like all the other major European armies, apart from the British, the French Army was based on a system of national military service with a large proportion of young men of the appropriate age group called up each year in peace time for three years as a conscript and then subject for seven years afterwards to recall for war service as a reservist. This system was administered on a regimental basis, although it should be made clear that the battalions making up the regiments would expect to serve together, unlike in the British regimental system where battalions would more usually be brigaded apart from the others of their regiment.

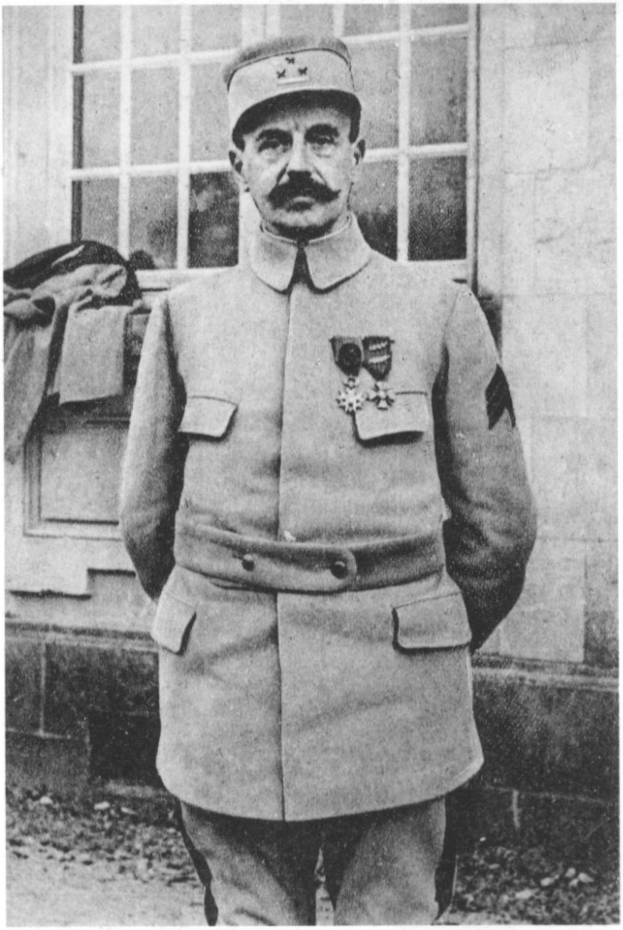
Tables and diagrams show the Order of Battle of the French Army at the start of the war in 1914 and the composition of corps, divisions and smaller units at various times in the course of the conflict as organisations changed to accord with manpower availability and new tactics and weapons.

Line infantry

The line infantry was divided into 173 active regiments (with a pre-war existence), an equal number of reserve regiments (formed from recalled reservists on mobilisation, and numbered by adding two hundred to the number of their parent regiment) and 145 territorial regiments (formed of men who had fulfilled their reservist obligations but were still of military age). Territorial regiments contained a variable number of battalions, depending on the size of the local population. Each such regiment contained two machine gun sections. Manpower shortages in 1916 saw two reserve regiments from each reserve division being disbanded, and the survivors distributed between the other regiments.

Generals Pau, Joffre and Castelnau in 1914. Castelnau wears the braided dolman, the other two, the tunique. (IWM)

Towards the end of the War, a number of French Army units were formed from prisoners of war and from volunteers transferred from the *Légion Etrangère*, and these went on to form the nucleus



Général de division Debeney in 1917. He is wearing a fairly regulation vareuse, and three service chevrons. His képi has a line of braid around the crown, and another under the three stars of his rank, to indicate his command of an army corps.

of the armies of independent Czechoslovakia and Poland. They wore a uniform similar to that of the French, but with their own badges on helmet and *capote*.

Light infantry

In 1914 the light infantry was composed of 31 active battalions of *chasseurs à pied*. Each of these also raised a reserve battalion, which was numbered the same as its parent battalion, plus 40. Battalions were normally attached to infantry divisions, but from 1915 some were grouped into the 43e DI (*Division d'Infanterie* – 43rd Infantry Division).

In 1888, fear of a possible Italian invasion had led to the conversion of 12 light battalions into *chasseurs alpins*, specifically trained for mountain warfare in the Alps on the Franco-Italian frontier. Once France had received assurances that Italy was not about to fulfil its treaty obligations to Germany in 1914, these battalions were transferred to the Vosges front, and later formed into the 47e DI. The battalions concerned were – 6e, 7e, 11e-14e, 22e–24e, 27e, 28e and 30e. A third chasseur formation was that consisting of the groups of *chasseur cyclists* (*see* Plate B1).

Order of Battle August 1914

North-East Army Group (General Joffre)

1st Army (Gen. Dubail)
    7th Corps (14th, 41st Divisions)
    8th Corps (15ath, 16th Divisions)
    13th Corps (25th, 26 Divisions)
    14th Corps (27th, 28th Divisions)
    21st Corps (13th, 43rd Divisions)
    6th, 8th Cavalry Divisions
    44th Division
    1st Reserve Group (58th, 63rd, 66th Divisions)
    Alpine Group

2nd Army (Gen. de Castelnau)
    9th Corps (17th, 18th, Morocco Divisions)
    15th Corps (29th, 30th Divisions)
    16th Corps (31st, 32nd Divisions)
    18th Corps (35th, 36th Divisions)
    20th Corps (11th, 39th Divisions)
    2nd, 10th Cavalry Divisions
    2nd Reserve Group (59th, 68th, 70th Divisions)

3rd Army (Gen. Ruffey)
    4th Corps (7th, 8th Divisions)
    5th Corps (9th, 10th Divisions)
    6th Corps (12th, 40th, 42nd Divisions)
    7th Cavalry Division
    3rd Reserve Group (54th, 55th, 56th Divisions)

4th Army (Gen. Langle de Cary)
    12th Corps (23rd, 24th Divisions)
    17th Corps (33rd, 34th Divisions)
    Colonial Corps (1st, 2nd, 3rd Colonial Divisions)
    9th Cavalry Division

5th Army (Gen. Lanrezac)
    1st Corps (1st, 2nd Divisions)
    2nd Corps (3rd, 4th Divisions)
    3rd Corps (5th, 6th Divisions)
    10th Corps (19th, 20th Divisions)
    11th Corps (12th, 21st Divisions)
    4th Cavalry Division
    38th Division
    4th Reserve Group (51st, 53rd, 69th Divisions)
    52nd, 60th Divisions

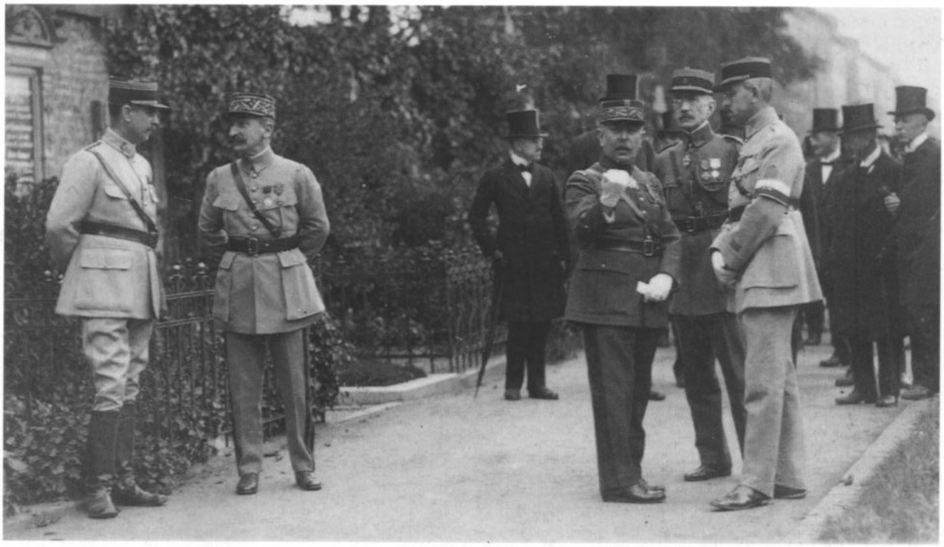
G.H.Q. Reserve
    Cavalry Corps (1st, 3rd, 5th Cavalry Divisions)

War Ministry Reserve
    61st, 62nd, 67th Divisions

Mobile Defences of the North-East
    57th, 71st, 72, 73rd Divisions

14th and 15th Region Reserves
    64th, 65th, 74th, 75th Divisions

A group of officers in the Occupied Zone of Germany in 1919. From left to right: a chef de bataillon of the 103e RI, a général de division, a général de brigade and a staff colonel of Colonial troops, and a captain on the staff of an army or army corps.



Cavalry

Cuirassiers

There were 12 regiments of cuirassiers, dressed in almost Napoleonic fashion in steel helmet and cuirass. They were organised into brigades of two regiments, serving in the 1st, 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th and 9th Cavalry Divisions.

From November 1914 every cavalry brigade formed a 'Light Group' of a number of squadrons drawn from its constituent regiments and attached cyclists. These were in fact infantry units, and those drawn from the cuirassiers were soon renamed cuirassiers à pied. Additionally, from 1916, six horsed regiments (the 4e, 5e, 8e, 9e, 11e and 12e) were formally organised as infantry.

Dragoons

There were 32 regiments of dragoons in 1914, employed in the different cavalry divisions. These were also organised into brigades of two regiments, forming a division either with a brigade of cuirassiers, or in the case of the 2nd, 5th, 8th and 10th Divisions, with a second brigade of dragoons.

Chasseurs à cheval

There were 21 regiments of chasseurs à cheval, forming part of the light cavalry arm. There was a light brigade in each of the 2nd to 8th Cavalry Divisions; those of the 2nd and 5th consisted of two chasseur regiments, those of the 6th–8th Divisions of one regiment of chasseurs and one of hussars. The remaining regiments were largely dispersed, serving as corps and divisional cavalry – where possible the four prewar regular squadrons of a regiment formed the corps cavalry, whilst the 5th and 6th Squadrons, formed from reservists on mobilisation, were divisional cavalry. The reserve squadrons of those light regiments serving in cavalry divisions functioned as divisional cavalry with reserve and territorial divisions.

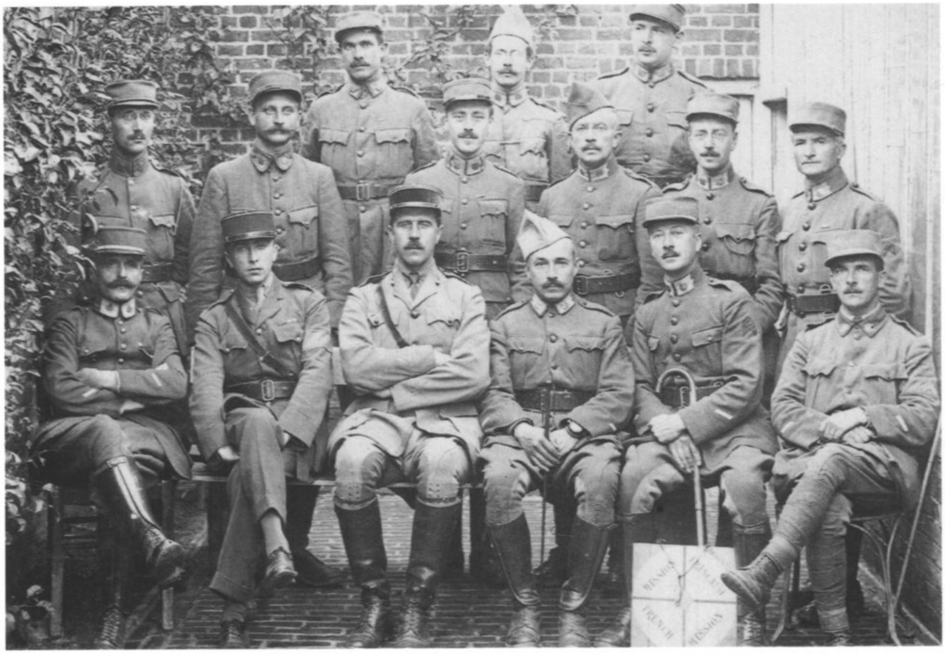
Hussars

The 14 regiments of hussars formed the other element of the light cavalry. The 3rd and 4th Cavalry Divisions each had a light cavalry brigade composed of two regiments of hussars; the remainder served as divisional or corps cavalry.

Artillery and engineers

The artillery consisted of a number of different branches. There were 62 regiments of field artillery in 1914, equipped with the 75 mm field gun, and attached to both infantry and cavalry divisions, or in Corps reserve. There were also two mountain artillery regiments, equipped with 65 mm guns carried on mule-back; five heavy artillery regiments, equipped with either 120 mm or 155 mm guns; nine regiments of 'foot artillery', equipped with siege artillery; and ten independent *groupes* (of three or four batteries each) in Africa.

The wartime regiment functioned largely as an administrative unit – most *groupes* serving together in corps and divisional artillery were drawn from different regiments. In 1917, many of the latter were

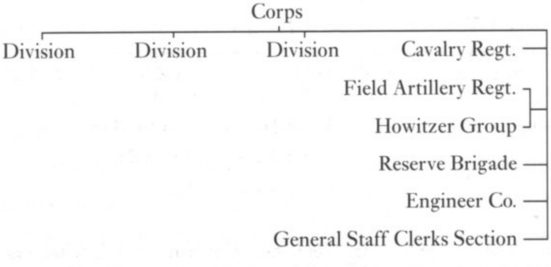


The French liaison team attached to the British 20th Division. Most of them wear khaki with sky blue distinctions, together with the metal sphinx badge of the interpreter. There are almost as many different styles of vareuse as there are men. The open collar and tie was a fashion of front-line troops, in imitation of the British. The officer in charge (centre, front) wears the velvet faced képi of the Engineers.

largely amalgamated to form new regiments, numbered from 200. Most units were horse-drawn, though from 1915, an increasing number used Jeffery tractors. Some field guns were also mounted on tractor chassis, to speed up cross-country movement – there were 33 of these units by November 1918, known as *régiments portés*.

Trench artillery weapons consisted of a 37 mm close support cannon manned by infantry and various trench mortars of different calibres manned by artillerymen. The most prominent in use were the Brandt 90 mm, and the Stokes. Larger calibres included the Fabry 150T and 240CT or LT, which came into use in 1916–17.

Organisation of an Army Corps



Note: The same basic structure held good for the War, the main changes occurring in support arms. By 1917, Corps artillery consisted of two groups (six batteries) of 75s, a group of 120L heavies and a group of 105 howitzers. Occasionally, one or two groups of 90s or 95s were attached. The cavalry and reserve brigade were transferred elsewhere.

The engineers consisted of 11 regiments, of which one, the 5e, was a railway regiment, and another (the 8e) a signals regiment. They were split up into company-sized or smaller detachments, attached to infantry divisions or army corps.

Both artillery and engineers were responsible for providing weapons and wagons for the Army from their own workshops and arsenals.

Artillerie Spéciale

The French tank arm was formed in late 1916 as part of the artillery, and this was reflected in its organisation and uniforms, with each of the early units, equipped with Schneiders or Saint Chamonds, being organised into batteries. The light Renault tanks produced slightly later were organised differently, since they were conceived more as mobile machine-gun posts to support the infantry.

Aviation

The *Service Aéronautique* was formed in 1903, as an offshoot of the engineers. A reorganisation of 1912 created separate aircraft, balloon (*aérostation*) and administration sections. Units then belonged to either the balloon group at Versailles or one of two aircraft groups at Lyons and Reims. There were 21 squadrons in 1914, numbered consecutively, but distinguished by a prefix indicating their equipment; this number had increased to 331 by 1918.

Administration, train, medical

The Administration embraced not only clerks and General Staff personnel, but also supply troops and medical orderlies. Their uniform was similar to that of the line infantry except that the buttons of ordinary clerks were in tin rather than brass. Medical orderlies wore a Red Cross armband. Supply officers (Intendance) had their own uniform with different badges.

The *Train des équipages*, or more simply, the Train, was the transport corps. Its uniform was based on that of the artillery. It contained 21 squadrons in 1914, but this was soon increased by a large number of territorial units.

The *Service Automobile*, which was formed from the Train, provided drivers for staff cars and trucks alike. Each motorised unit was organised into *sections* of 20 vehicles each with 45 men and an officer. They were distinguished by letters indicating their purpose, and a number. These letters were TP (transport of personnel), TM (matériel), RVF (fresh meat), SS (ambulance – English and American volunteer units were designated SSA and SSU respectively), TMR (building materials, etc.), TPT (telegraph personnel), SMA (artillery shells) and SP (transport park). Each section could be formed into a Groupe of four sections under a captain, and was named after the officer in command. Army Reserve transport consisted of two to three *groupements* of five to six groupes each. Traffic was controlled in rear areas by various *Commissions Régulatrices Automobiles*, the first

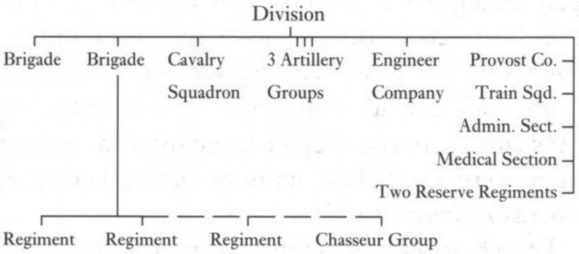
Table A: Brassards

General Staff of the President of the Republic: horizontal stripes in blue, white and red, with a gold stylised thunderbolt
Personal staff of the Minister of War: white with the thunderbolt
Staff of the Ministry of War, of Armies and of Army Groups: horizontal stripes of white over red, with the thunderbolt
Army Corps staff: horizontal stripes in blue, white red, with the thunderbolt above the Corps number in arabic numerals
Divisional staff: red, with grenade for infantry, or eight-pointed star for cavalry, above the divisional number in arabic numerals
Brigade staff: blue, with a grenade or eight-pointed star and the brigade number in arabic numerals, except for divisional cavalry, which used roman numerals
Brigade staff: blue, with a grenade or eight-pointed star and the brigade number in arabic numerals, except for divisional cavalry, which used roman numerals
Artillery Brigade (attached to an Army Corps): blue with crossed cannon above the corps number in arabic numerals
Army Engineers: red, with the helmeted cuirass branch device
Staff of the Governor of a fortified place: red with the thunderbolt
Stretcher bearer of an ambulance unit: white with a red cross
Stretcher bearer of a line unit: horizon blue or khaki, depending on the regiment, with a white Maltese cross. Piped on top and bottom with the same colour. It was positioned to conceal the musician's badge on the upper arm
Drivers of regimental transport: horizon blue or khaki, with the regimental number embroidered in the same colour as the *soutaches* and numbers on the collar patches, piped on to and bottom with the same colour (replaced by dark brown embroidery for khaki uniforms from September 1916).
Cyclists: horizon blue or khaki with the regimental number in the distinctive colour; zouaves and tirailleurs added a crescent above the number. Superseded in September 1916 by the next item, and abolished in November of the same year
Runners, dispatch carriers: horizon blue or khaki with the letter 'L' (i.e. *liaison*) in the distinctive colour. Introduced September 1916
Flying personnel: dark blue with yellow edging and a yellow propeller; a smaller version was attached to the flying helmet
Service Automobile: red with a white (silver for officers) letter 'A'. This was replaced by a horizon blue version in 1915, with the same colour letters, and in 1916, by one with a dark blue letter for other ranks. Officers continued with their silver version, until it was abolished with the introduction of Service Automobile uniforms for officers.
Traffic control units: green over white (introduced 1917)

Note: Staff brassards were made of silk; the Red Cross band of stretcher bearers from cotton; and the rest from uniform cloth.

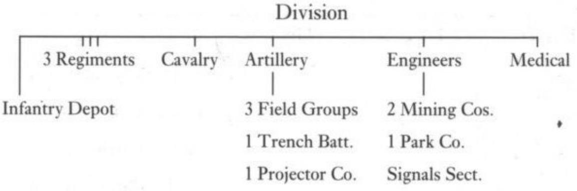
Organisation of an Infantry Division

August 1914



Note: Some, but by no means all, Regular Divisions had a chasseur group of one or two battalions attached. By 1916, the Reserve Regiments and the chasseur group had been removed to form their own divisions; a trench artillery battery had been added, and there were three engineer companies as well as a signalling detachment. Reserve Divisions, numbered from 51, had three regiments in each brigade, and no chasseur group.

Summer 1917



Notes: The change to a three regiment (nine battalion)-division was a gradual one, begun in late 1916, and still not completed in eight out of the 108 divisions by November 1917. A further fourteen divisions had either eight, ten or eleven battalions at the same time.

Divisional cavalry was one squadron when the division formed part of a Corps, two squadrons otherwise.

Divisional artillery was also upposed to have a battery of 155TR howitzers attached, but by 1917, only four divisions contained such a unit.

of which was formed at Bar-le-Duc in February 1916 to control the *Voie Sacrée* behind Verdun.

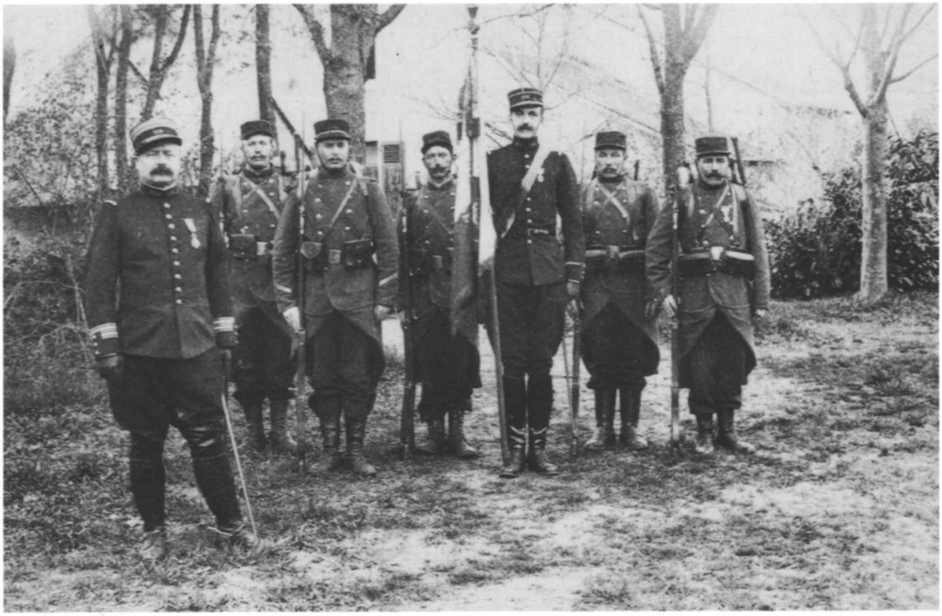
The *Service de Santé* was the medical branch, and consisted only of officers in one of two specialities – doctors or chemists (orderlies and stretcher bearers were provided by the Administration branch, or by individual units). The jacket bore a gold embroidered collar badge employing the traditional medical symbol of a caduceus in a wreath.

The African Army

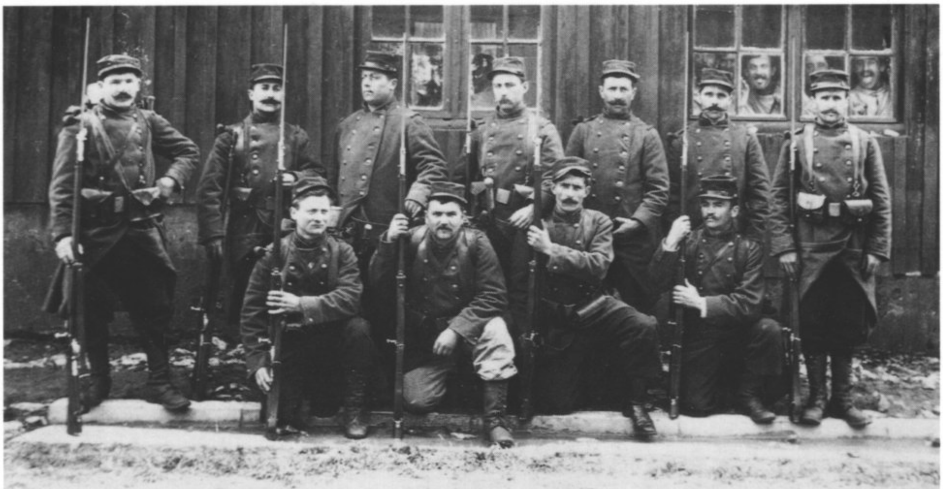
The *Armée d'Afrique* was the unofficial name given to the regiments of the XIX Army Corps area, raised to garrison France's North African possessions. There were several different types of regiment – those recruited from Frenchmen (*zouaves*, African Light Infantry, *chasseurs d'Afrique*), those recruited from the indigenous population (*tirailleurs, spahis*), and the *Légion Etrangère*, the Foreign Legion.

Zouaves and tirailleurs

There were four regiments each of zouaves and tirailleurs. Complete regiments were not sent to France, but rather *régiments de marche*, composed of a mixture of active, reserve and newly-raised battalions. This resulted in nine régiments de marche de zouaves, two régiments de marche d'Afrique (one a zouave/Foreign Legion formation, the second all zouave), four régiments de marche mixtes de zouaves et tirailleurs and 20 régiments de marche de



A colour party in 1913. The men are all wearing the devices of the 104e RI, but a note on the back of the photo states that it is the colour of the Reserve Regiment, the 304e, so this must be a regular cadre. The two men on the right are wearing 1888 ammunition pouches.



A squad of the 29e RI. Note the roll of the greatcoat shoulder to support the rifle. They are wearing a combination of pouches of different dates.

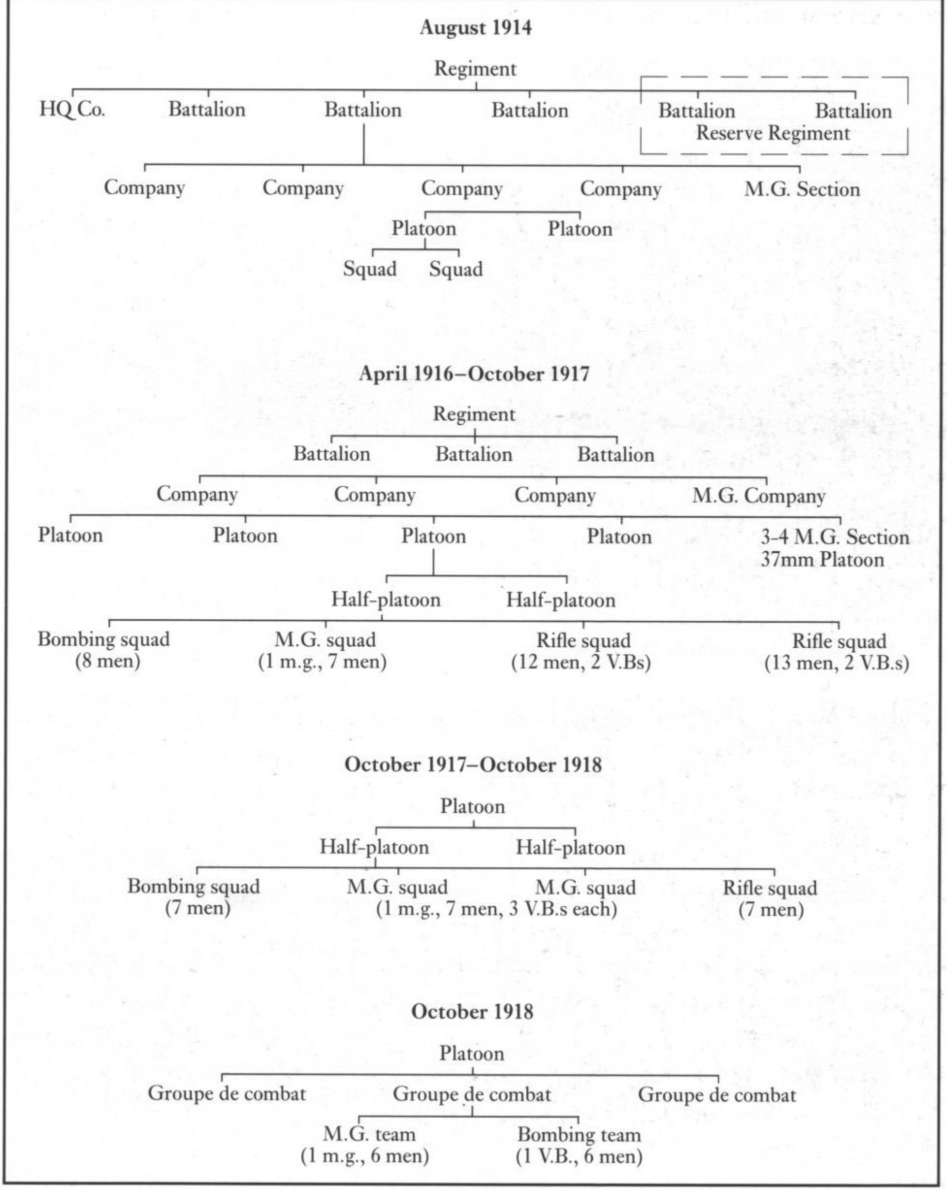
tirailleurs. It was the numbers of these regiments that appeared on the khaki uniform, rather than that of the individual's parent regiment. Two other regiments were raised from native Moroccans (which was a French protectorate in 1914) called régiments de marche de chasseurs indigènes in 1914, later renamed tirailleurs marocains.

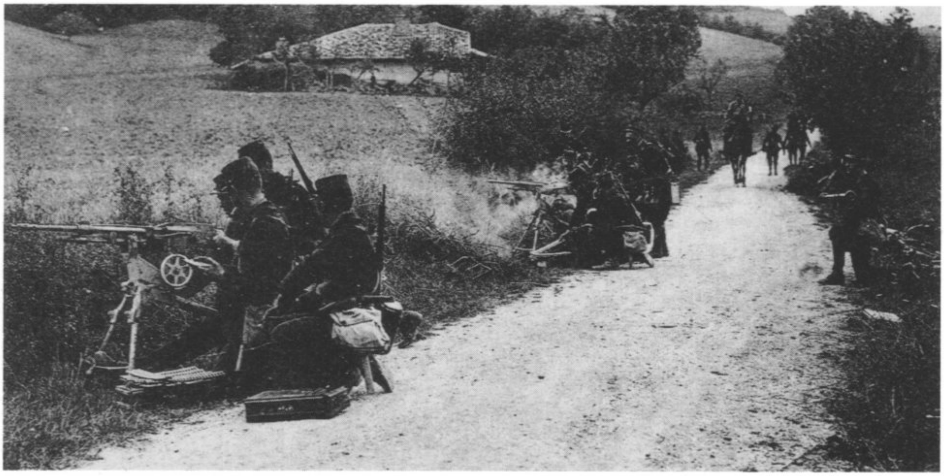
Particularly early in the war, zouave regiments attacked with a ferocity unknown in the metropolitan army, and were for some time an elite attack force. Wartime losses gradually diluted this fervour, and by the end of the war, they were no better than most line regiments. The tirailleurs were by no means as steady, though the best battalions fought very well. There were several incidents of panic and small-scale mutinies from the beginning, and they often had to be stiffened by the presence of French troops within each brigade.

African Light Infantry

Although frequently described as such, the *Infanterie Légère d'Afrique* was not a penal regiment – but its rank and file were either men released from military prisons awaiting the end of their engagement, or

Organisation of an Infantry Regiment


August 1914
Regiment
HQ Co.
Battalion
Battalion
Battalion
Battalion
Battalion
Reserve Regiment
Company
Company
Company
Company
M.G. Section
Platoon
Platoon
Squad
Squad
April 1916–October 1917
Regiment
Battalion
Battalion
Battalion
Company
Company
Company
M.G. Company
Platoon
Platoon
Platoon
Platoon
3-4 M.G. Section
37mm Platoon
Half-platoon
Half-platoon
Bombing squad (8 men)
M.G. squad (1 m.g., 7 men)
Rifle squad (12 men, 2 V.Bs)
Rifle squad (13 men, 2 V.B.s)
October 1917–October 1918
Platoon
Half-platoon
Half-platoon
Bombing squad (7 men)
M.G. squad
M.G. squad
(1 m.g., 7 men, 3 V.B.s each)
Rifle squad (7 men)
October 1918
Platoon
Groupe de combat
Groupe de combat
Groupe de combat
M.G. team (1 m.g., 6 men)
Bombing team (1 V.B., 6 men)



A St Etienne machine gun section in action. The ammunition strips are on the ground at the side of the weapon. On the right is a man with a stereoscopic rangefinder.

petty criminals convicted in France. This grim mixture was held under a discipline at least as tough as that of the Legion.

The five regular battalions formed three bataillons de marche, which served in France.

Foreign Legion

The large influx of foreign volunteers who joined the French Army in 1914 were directed into the Foreign Legion. Here, they were formed into régiments de marche belonging to the two existing Legion infantry regiments. The regiments thus formed were the 2e, 3e, and 4e of the 1er Régiment Etranger and the 2e of the 2e Régiment. Heavy losses in action, and the repatriation of men of Allied nations into their own armies forced a reorganisation, and in 1915 these regiments were all amalgamated into the formidable Régiment de Marche de la Légion Etrangère, which earned itself an almost unparalleled fighting record. A Legion battalion also formed part of the 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique with two zouave battalions; whilst other battalions, largely of German and Austrian soldiers, served in Morocco and the Sahara.

Chasseurs d'Afrique

The chasseurs d'Afrique were the European cavalry component of the Armée d'Afrique. There were six regiments in 1914, and initially one régiment de marche was sent to France, then dismounted to fight as infantry, only to be reformed as cavalry in 1915. Five regiments, including one newly-raised, fought on the Western Front, whilst three served in Macedonia. A detached squadron also served in Palestine.

Spahis

Spahis were light cavalry regiments recruited from native personnel. There were four North African regiments in 1914, and a further three were raised during the war. All served on the Western Front at one time or another, and a detached squadron served in Palestine. Although it was noted that spahis' horses stood up better to long marches than those of metropolitan regiments, in comparison with British practice the horses were heavily burdened and offsaddled only infrequently.

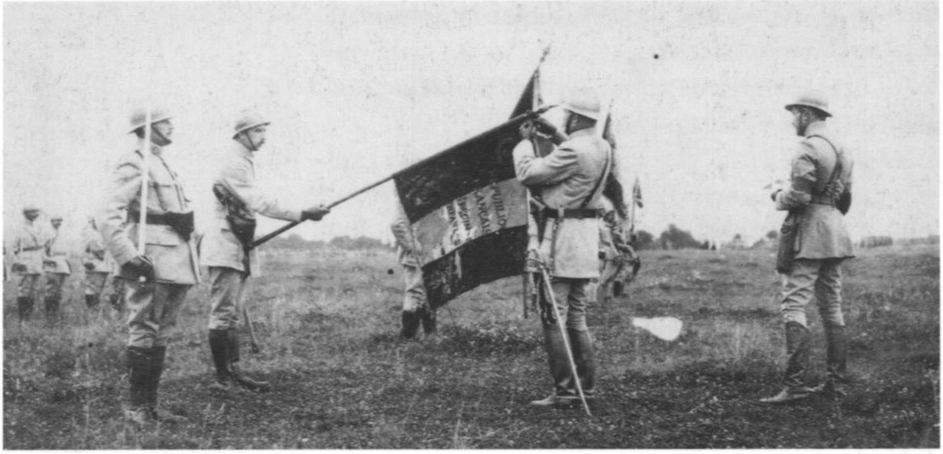
Mention should also be made of two squadrons of spahis sénégalais, who hardly saw action outside French African territory during the war; and the compagnies sahariennes, camel-mounted Chambaa or Touareg under French officers, who secured the Saharan oases from Senussi attack.

Colonial troops

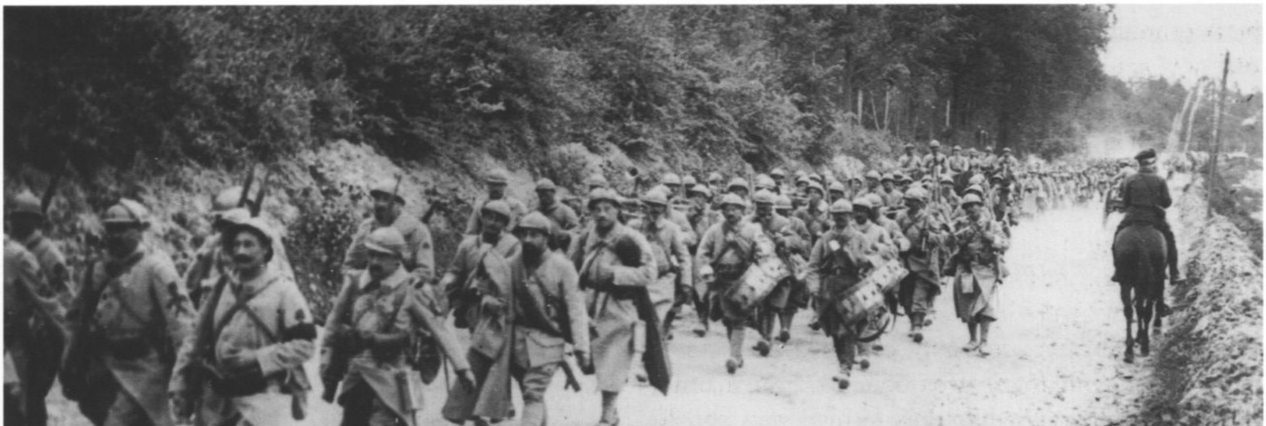
Colonial troops were regiments raised from French citizens in France or the Colonies, to garrison the latter, and consisted of European infantry and artillery, administrative and medical staffs, and a number of native regiments.

In 1914, there were 12 infantry regiments stationed in France (numbered 1 to 8 and 21 to 24) plus a further four in the colonies (one in China and three in Indochina); in addition, there were six regiments of mixed Europeans and Senegalese in Morocco, and independent battalions in West Africa, Madagascar and New Caledonia. A further 19 regiments were raised from reservists or from scratch during the course of the war, most of these being régiments mixtes, formed from European and Senegalese bat-

The presentation of a regimental award to the 78e RI. A number of such awards would lead to the wearing of a fourragère on the uniform.



Below: The 313e RI, complete with regimental pioneers and band, march up to the line, 1917. (IWM)



talions. The most distinguished was the Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc, the most highly decorated unit of the war, raised originally from personnel stationed in Morocco in 1914.

Native regiments

Regiments were raised from indigenous peoples in Africa and Indochina. In 1914 there were 21 battalions of Senegalese in Northern and Western Africa, as well as ten battalions of Malagasies and one of Somalis; two regiments of Congolese in Equitorial Africa; and five Indochinese regiments.

Five battalions of Senegalese present on operations in North Africa at the outbreak of war were moved to France after the opening of hostilities, forming two régiments de marche sénégalais. After a reorganisation, and with the addition of a European battalion, they formed two régiments mixtes coloniaux and the Régiment Mixte Colonial du Maroc. The mixed white/Senegalese regiments became the norm, going on to serve in other régiments mixtes coloniaux in the Dardanelles and Salonika, and being replaced in France by new battalions (a further 93 battalions of Senegalese alone) raised in 1915–18. Most of the Malagasy and Indochinese units served as depot troops, although some did see combat, both in France and Macedonia. There were also some 36,000 Chinese labourers who served in France.

Colonial artillery and administration

In 1914, there were three artillery regiments, equipped with 75s, stationed in France, and a further two in Indochina. During the course of the war, a further 15 regiments were raised, an approximate total of 160 batteries.

There were also separate administrative, medical and telegraph services.

Navy

The Navy provided landing parties of sailors, but more significantly, a number of battalions of *fusiliers-marins*, which fought as a brigade under Contre-Amiral Ronarc'h in Belgium throughout the war, and a number of groupes mixtes of armoured cars attached to both infantry and cavalry formations (N.B. a fusilier-marin is one trade specialisation amongst others within the French Navy – they are not marines in the British or American sense).

UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

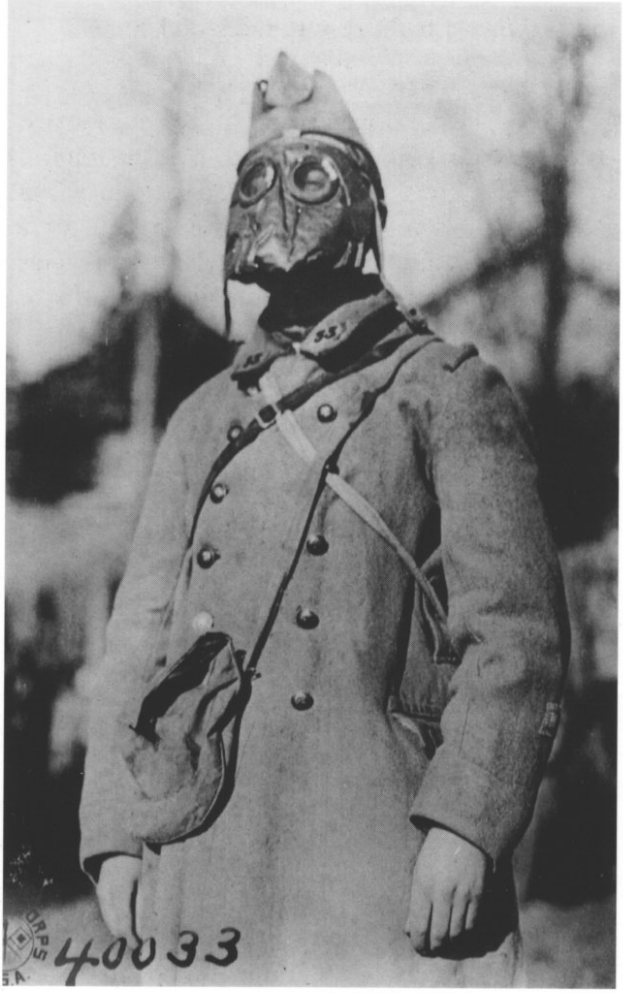
Uniforms of 1914

The uniforms worn in 1914 were broadly similar throughout the Army. For dismounted personnel, the uniform consisted of a jacket (*veste* for other ranks, an 1897 pattern *tunique* or 1913 pattern *vareuse* for officers), the 1867 pattern trousers, an 1877 pattern greatcoat (*capote*), an 1884 pattern *képi*, the 1893 boots and the 1897 gaiters. In practice, the veste was rarely worn, except under the greatcoat in cold weather, the capote being the usual order of dress.

The 1884 képi, standard throughout the Army, was little different from Second Empire patterns, and was coloured according to the arm of service.

The veste was a simple jacket with a low upright collar in the arm-of-service colour and seven buttons down the front; the tunique was more formal with a deeper collar and a three-button cuff flap, and was usually worn only by senior NCOs. The vareuse, whilst retaining the seven buttons down the front, also had an integral waist belt, fastened with two buttons at the front, and had a wide box pleat at the back.

Cavalry, on the other hand, wore an 1883 pattern tunique, a shako or helmet depending on the branch (with a képi for off-duty wear), ankle boots and leggings. The tunique and trousers were of a more generous cut than those of the infantry, as was the greatcoat (*manteau*), which was intended to cover the whole saddle.



Differences between the various arms of service were displayed in the colours of the képi and the trousers (which were red for most arms except artillery and engineers) and in the colour and shape of the patches on the collars of both capote and veste. Both the tunique and the vareuse had collars and cuff patches in the facing colour. Details of all these are given in the accompanying tables.

Those regiments recruited from natives in the various overseas possessions were the only exception to these general rules. North African regiments – zouaves, tirailleurs and spahis – all wore short jackets with baggy trousers and, as headgear, either a fez or a *haïck*. Regiments from elsewhere in Africa and from Indochina wore a sand coloured cotton uniform of collarless shirt and shorts, with either a fez or a bamboo cap.

From full dress to horizon blue

Alone amongst the Great Powers in 1914, France had no camouflage uniform available for general use in its principal army, which continued to wear uniforms little changed from those of the Second Empire. This was not for want of trying, but each attempt to introduce such a uniform had foundered in a morass of misplaced sentimentality and political point scoring.

The most distinctive feature of the uniform was the *garance* red trousers, introduced originally in 1829, in an attempt to boost the French madder-growing industry (the dye, also known as madder, was produced from the root of the madder plant), then trying to win a share in world markets against British competition. As long as the range of firearms was measured in hundreds of feet, and tactics were still Napoleonic, the high visibility of the garments was not a problem; but even by the period of the Franco-Prussian War, the increased ranges of the weapons then in use made this visibility a liability, and some dissenting voices had been raised. The introduction of smokeless powder from 1890 increased battlefield visibility even further.

At first the red trousers and képi were retained because they provided a ready mark of difference between the French and German Armies (the darker-uniformed chasseurs à pied had been mistaken for Germans on the battlefields of 1870, particularly that of Coulmiers). Several attempts were made to find an alternative uniform by Ministers concerned about future wars. In 1902, a blue-grey *tenue Boër*, so called because of the slouch hat which replaced the képi, underwent trials; followed 12 months later by a *beige-bleu* uniform (which actually appeared as grey at a distance). Both were rejected for their similarity to German uniforms. A grey-green *tenue réséda* was tried in 1911 following the introduction of khaki into the British Army in 1908, and of field grey into the German Army in 1910, but this was rejected as being too like the Italian Army's uniforms.

The native dye industry had succumbed to artifi-

Left: A soldier tries out his M2 gas mask. (IWM)

Table B: Distinctions of uniforms in 1914

	Tunic Offs./O.R.s	*Facings*	*Buttons*	*Trousers/stripe*
Generals	black	black	yellow	scarlet/black (2 stripes and a line of piping)
General Staff	black	garance	yellow	garance/black
Line infantry	black/blue	garance	yellow	garance/black
Light infantry	black/blue	jonquil	white	blue-grey/jonquil
Cuirassiers	black/blue	scarlet	white	garance/black
Dragoons	black/blue	white	white	garance/black
Chasseurs à cheval	pale/sky blue	crimson	white	garance/light blue
Hussars	pale/sky blue	pale blue	white	garance/pale blue
Remount companies	black/blue	black	white	garance/sky blue
Artillery	dark blue	scarlet	yellow	dark blue/scarlet (2 stripes and a line of piping
Engineers	dark blue	black	yellow	dark blue/scarlet (2 stripes and a line of piping)
Train	iron grey/dk grey	garance	white	garance/iron grey
Service de Santé	black	crimson/green	yellow	garance/black
Gendarmerie	black	scarlet	white	grey-blue/black
Zouaves	black	scarlet	yellow	garance/black
Tirailleurs	sky blue	garance	yellow	garance/sky blue
Inf. Lég. d'Afrique	black/blue	black/yellow	white	garance/none
Légion Etrangère	black/blue	garance	yellow	garance/black
Chasseurs d'Afrique	pale/sky blue	jonquil	white	garance/sky blue
Spahis	scarlet	pale blue	white	pale blue/garance
Colonial infantry	black/blue	black/blue	yellow	grey-blue/scarlet
Colonial artillery	dark blue	dark blue	yellow	grey-blue/scarlet

Notes

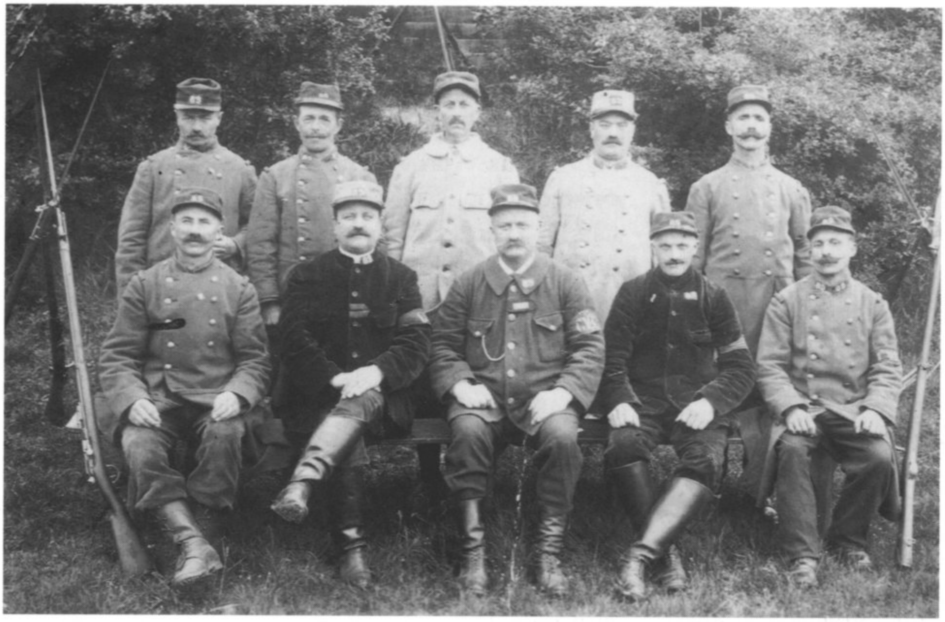
Tunic: refers to *tunique* (officers) or *veste* (other ranks)

Facings: appeared on collars and on cuff patches of the *tunique*; those of engineer officers and Service de Santé were of velvet

Buttons: yellow and white metal were gilded or silvered for officers; officers' rank braid followed this colour

Trousers: except as noted above, only officers and N.C.O.s had stripes (two stripes and a line of piping in the light cavalry); other ranks had a line of piping only

Officers seconded to Staff appointments wore their own regimentals



Bretons of the 89e Régiment d'Infanterie Territoriale. They are wearing a miscellaneous collection of uniforms – four of the men on the front row are wearing corduroy trousers, and two, corduroy tunics. The man third from the left in the back row is wearing the simplified 1914 greatcoat. They are employed on lines of communication duties (the letters on the brassards are G.V.C. = gardes à voies de communication).

cial colours in the 1870s, and madder had been replaced by the chemical alarizine, so that was no longer an issue. But by this time, the uniform question had become caught up in the larger struggle between Left and Right in the French political system. The Radical Left, gaining power in the wake of the Dreyfus affair in 1899, had sought to 'republicanise' the Army by breaking down what it thought was a caste-ridden system and replacing it by a kind of citizens' militia. One of their aims was to abolish the gaudier items of uniform, so minimising the difference in dress between soldier and civilian. The Right opposed this on principle, and red trousers thus became an article of faith rather than a functional garment. The newspaper *Echo de Paris* went further, denouncing any attempt to introduce a camouflage uniform as the work of a Masonic plot! The Army itself had no say at all – the inherent weakness of governments in the Third Republic (there were 42 Ministers of War between 1871 and 1914), and the anti-militaristic attitudes of the Left, did not encourage soldiers, the generals especially, to venture an opinion in public. Adolphe Messimy, Minister of War in 1911, was moved to predict that 'This blind stupid attachment to the most visible of colours will have cruel consequences'; yet, even in 1913, Minister of War Eugène Etienne could expostulate, 'Abolish red trousers? Never! Red trousers are France!'

The military artists Georges Scott and Edouard Détaille made a fourth attempt at designing a new uniform, retaining red trousers but with a blue-grey (*bleu cendré*) tunic. But this was no more successful than the others. A fifth attempt used 'tricolour' cloth of blue (60 per cent), red (30 per cent) and white (10 per cent) threads, until it was found that the appropriate red alarizine dye was produced only in Germany. It was decided instead to proceed without the red. The resulting shade was officially named light blue (*bleu clair*), but was popularly christened horizon blue on its introduction. Yet it still remains unclear just why *this* shade was chosen in preference to the rest, particularly since it offered little camouflage protection and was easily dirtied. Fortunately, the rather fugitive nature of the early dyes meant that the shade often decayed to a light blue-grey, which toned in well with the chalky mud of Champagne and Artois.

Production of the new uniform began at the end of August 1914, and General Galliéni, the Military Governor of Paris, was photographed wearing it as early as November of that year; but it was to be some time before it became widely available. Képis and puttees were the first items to be made from the new cloth, and these were mentioned in a circular of 5 January 1915 concerning the uniform of those at the front. A decision of 21 April 1915 ordered that men serving at the front should wear complete uniforms of the new material.

So it was that the French Army went to war in what was virtually full dress uniform, despite the trials of 1902, 1903 and 1911. Events proved Messimy right, and desperate short-term measures were needed to reduce its visibility, particularly the red trousers. Items in 'mechanic's blue', a deep sky blue shade, were issued as over-trousers to the infantry from October 1914, but were also worn on their own during warm weather; a képi cover in blue cretonne was also widely issued. These were followed by issues of trousers, vareuses and even *bonnets de police* in dark blue or brown corduroy to infantry and light cavalry. Some infantrymen received instead blue trousers with red piping, commandeered from local companies of firemen.

The new uniform was to be the same for all arms, but with distinguishing features in the collar patches, and in the piping down the outside of the trousers. The collar patches displayed the regimental number and had two lines of braid (*soutaches*), placed towards the rear of the patch. The uniform consisted of a tunic, trousers, greatcoat, puttees and a bonnet de police side cap, which had been revived to replace the képi (although officers tended to retain the képi). The vareuse was single breasted, closed with five small metal buttons painted horizon blue, with double rear vents, a stand-up collar, a belt loop on the left, and two pockets with flaps in the skirts. It was rarely worn, except in cold weather (under the greatcoat), and the usual order of dress was the simplified 1914 pattern capote, modified again in May 1915 by the addition of two more pockets in the skirts, which were invariably worn buttoned back. Trousers were tied just above the ankles with a draw string. They were generally of good woollen cloth or corduroy, or of ratteen for summer, and were tucked into puttees. Boots and belts were now produced in natural leather for economy.

A steel helmet was introduced, following a deci-

Table C: Colours of képis in use, 1914

	Band	*Top*	*Piping/braid O.R.s/Offs.*	*Badge*
Generals	dark blue	garance	gold	none
General Staff	the colours and devices of their original corps			
Infantry	dark blue	garance	dark blue/gold	regimental number
Light infantry	dark blue	dark blue	jonquil/silver	battalion number
Cuirassiers	dark blue	garance	dark blue/silver	regimental number
Dragoons	dark blue	garance	dark blue/silver	regimental number
Chasseurs à cheval	sky blue	red	red/silver	regimental number
Hussars	sky blue	red	sky blue/silver	regimental number
Remount companies	dark blue	garance	dark blue/silver	company number
Artillery	dark blue	dark blue	scarlet/gold	regimental number
Engineers	dark blue	dark blue	scarlet/gold	regimental number
Train	iron grey	garance	garance/silver	squadron number
Administration	dark blue	garance	dark blue/gold	
Service de Santé (doctors)	crimson	garance	gold	caduceus
Service de Santé (chemists)	green	garance	gold	caduceus
Gendarmerie	black	grey-blue	silver	grenade
Zouaves	black	garance	gilt	regimental number
Tirailleurs	sky blue	garance	gilt	regimental number
Inf. Lég. d'Afrique	dark blue	garance	yellow/silver	regimental number
Légion Etrangére	dark blue	garance	dark blue/gold	grenade
Chasseurs d'Afrique	not worn			
Spahis	garance	sky blue	gold	regimental number and a crescent
Colonial infantry	dark blue	dark blue	scarlet/gold	anchor
Colonial artillery	dark blue	dark blue	scarlet/gold	grenade

Notes

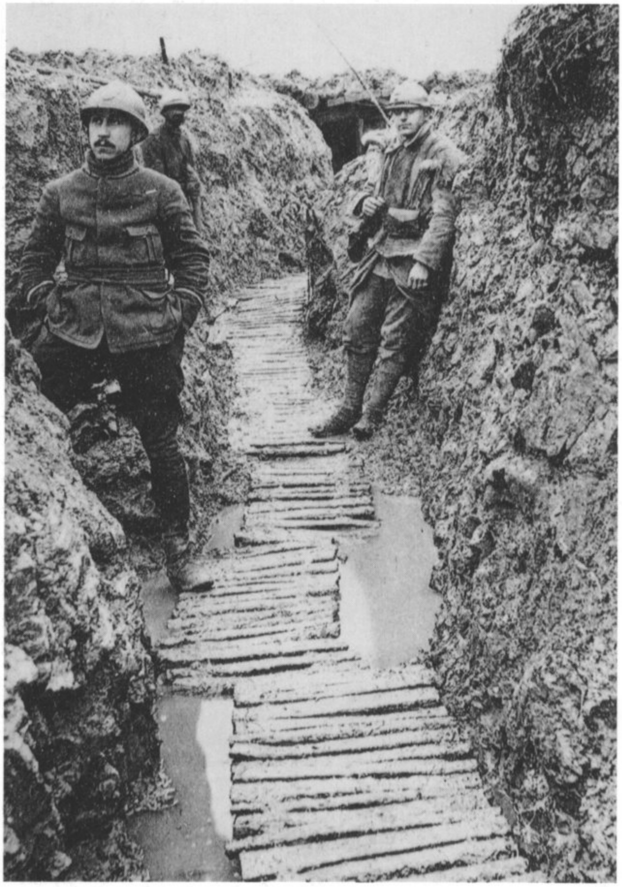
Képis were service dress headgear for all except the following: cuirassiers, dragoons, chasseurs à cheval, hussars and those units of artillery equipped with helmets, native officers and all other ranks of zouaves, tirailleurs and spahis, regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, natives of colonial regiments.

Bands were in velvet for the Service de Santé

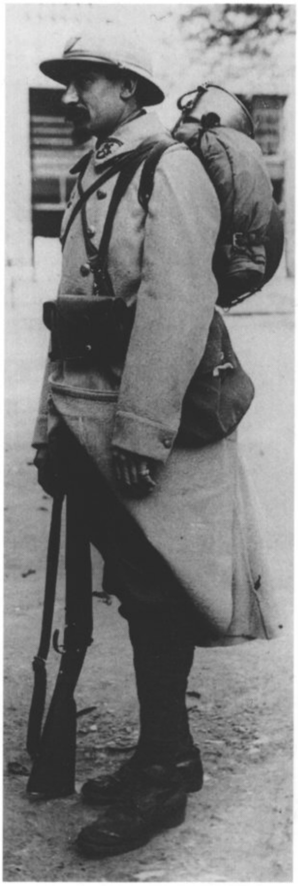
Bands and tops of dark blue were black for officers; sky blue bands of light cavalry regiments were pale blue for officers

On the 1914 pattern bluish-grey képi, the numbers were displayed on a bluish-grey rectangle –
- in garance: cuirassiers, dragoons and train
- in sky blue: chasseurs à cheval and hussars
- in scarlet: artillery and engineers
- in jonquil: chasseurs à pied
- and in bluish-grey figures on a garance rectangle: line infantry, remounts and administration

Colonial infantry used a red anchor, Colonial artillery a red grenade



The informal nature of French trenches is shown here. The officer on the left is a chasseur à pied, as revealed by the hunting horn badge on his helmet and his dark grey-blue uniform trousers; he is wearing a vareuse with its integral belt. Chasseurs were much less willing to discard their pre-war uniform than the line infantry.



Right: The official view of what a soldier, in this case a chasseur à pied, should look like. Needless to say, in the front line, comfort, rather than regulation, took precedence. (IWM)

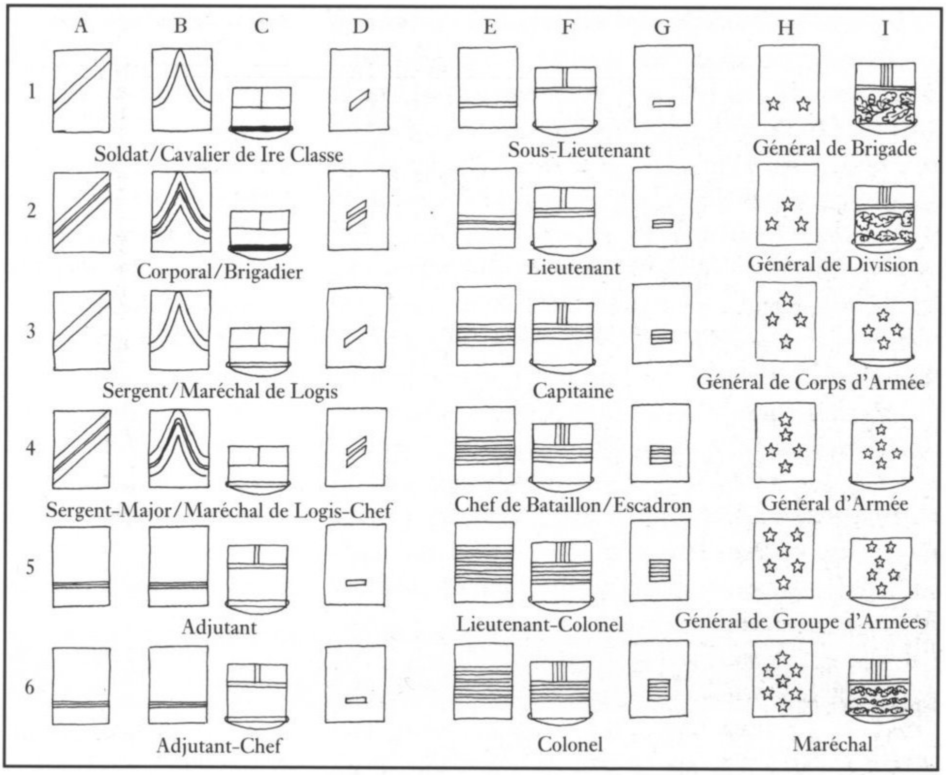
sion of 21 February 1915 to replace a steel skull cap worn under the képi. The original pattern was designed by Georges Scott, and was similar to a dragoon helmet, but this proved too costly to manufacture, and a much simplified pattern, the Adrian helmet, was produced on the orders of a Supply Department official by that name. This was officially adopted on 21 May, and by 23 December 1915, over 3 million examples had been produced. They were painted in shades of light blue, initially with such a gloss that khaki covers had to be introduced to cut down the reflection. On the front of the helmet was a badge, differing according to the arm of service.

Officers continued to wear the 1913 pattern vareuse, but many adopted a style inspired by the British uniform, without a belt and with large bellows pockets on the skirts, sometimes with pleated pockets, sometimes without. Private purchases from civilian tailors increased the variations on a basic theme. A Sam Browne style belt was frequently worn.

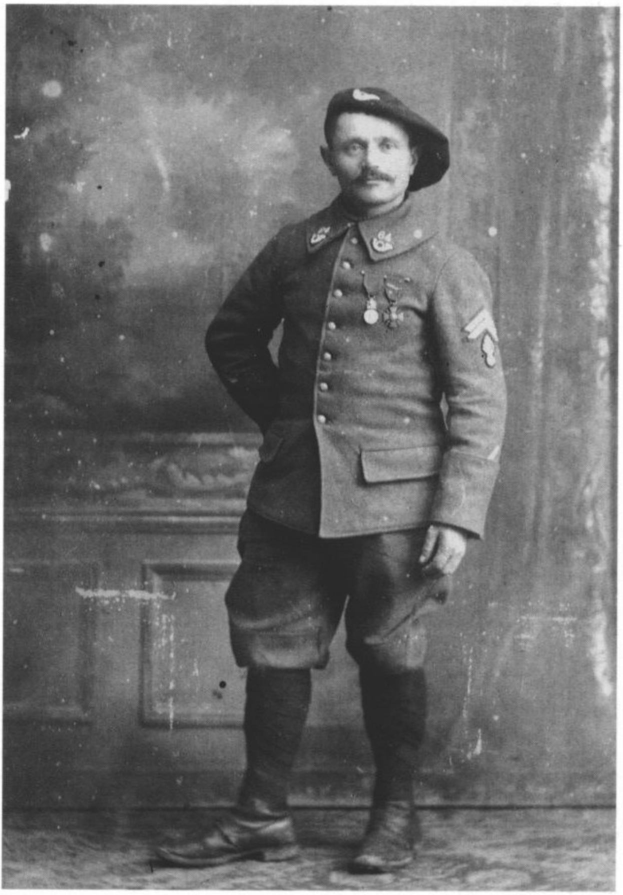
Rank badges were standardised in the infantry pattern, using 35 mm long strips of braid, in red for junior NCOs and gold for senior NCOs and officers, worn on the cuffs. Service at the front was indicated by a number of dark blue chevrons worn on the upper arm.

What makes the choice of horizon blue as a camouflage uniform colour even more strange is the fact that it had been decided to dress African regiments in khaki. Troops operating in hot climates had worn sand or khaki cotton uniforms for some years, but on their return to Europe, had resumed their usual dress, as detailed below, whilst the Moroccan chasseurs did not have a winter weight uniform at all. The visibility of their white trousers was already causing concern by September 1914, and as a temporary measure, French infantry greatcoats were handed out to the tirailleurs, along with brown corduroy trousers and dark blue puttees. When khaki uniforms started to arrive at the front, the first items issued were the trousers, but by spring 1915, whole uniforms in khaki were being supplied. In many

A diagrammatic representation of rank badges. Column A: 1914, greatcoats of all branches, tuniques of line infantry, Legion, cuirassiers, engineers, administration, Colonial infantry; Column B: 1914, tuniques of light infantry, African light infantry, cavalry except cuirassiers, artillery, train, and the jackets of zouaves and Algerians, Senegalese, etc. tirailleurs; Column C: 1914 képis; Column D: horizon blue uniform; Column E: 1914 officer's tunique; Column E: képis; Column F: horizon blue uniform; Columns G and H: generals' uniforms. A1–2 and B1–2 were in garance, except for engineers, artillery and train (scarlet), light infantry, tirailleurs and chasseurs d'Afrique (yellow). The braid of sergeants, adjutants-chefs and officers was in the button colour; those of adjutants, and the second and fourth lines of the lieutenant colonel's were in the opposite colour. All adjutants and adjutants-chefs wore a scarlet stripe in the centre of their sleeve braid, and metal/red mixed braid on their képis.


A
B
C
D
E
F
G
H
I
1
Soldat/Cavalier de Ire Classe
Sous-Lieutenant
Général de Brigade
2
Corporal/Brigadier
Lieutenant
Général de Division
3
Sergent/Maréchal de Logis
Capitaine
Général de Corps d'Armée
4
Sergent-Major/Maréchal de Logis-Chef
Chef de Bataillon/Escadron
Général d'Armée
5
Adjutant
Lieutenant-Colonel
Général de Groupe d'Armées
6
Adjutant-Chef
Colonel
Maréchal

Right: A warrant officer of the 64e BCA, the reserve unit of the 24e Bataillon de Chasseurs Alpins. His distinctions and badges, including non-regulation hunting horn collar badges, are in silver wire. The uniform is bluish iron-grey.



cases, the greatcoat was the last item to be issued, and some zouaves were issued temporarily with horizon blue items during the winter of 1914–15. The reason for the choice of khaki has never completely come to light. The original order, for 500,000 metres of cloth, went to Great Britain, and it may have been the ready availability of khaki cloth that was the deciding factor.

The style of the tunic and greatcoat was similar to that worn by French metropolitan regiments. The wide trousers of the zouaves and tirailleurs were initially replaced by ones similar to those of the French regiments, but cut rather more generously. These in turn were replaced late in 1915 by the so-called 'Russian breeches' (*culottes russes*), which resembled narrow-cut breeches. Puttees were khaki. The native regiments retained the tasselled fez (*chéchia*) as undress headgear, but with a cover in khaki for service and a blue one for walking out (the latter was later withdrawn). The tassel itself was in theory withdrawn in May 1915, but continued in use long afterwards. The shade of khaki employed could vary between garment and garment, according to its origin. The first uniforms were British khaki, but most of the later uniforms were of a more yellow shade, popularly called 'mustard'. Steel helmets, first issued in 1915, were painted horizon blue at first, then khaki.

The Légion Etrangère and Colonial regiments had converted to horizon blue in the same way as other metropolitan French regiments, but by 1916 these regiments were converting to khaki, with the result that both were sometimes worn together in the same regiment (and indeed, on the same person).

Regimental awards

As the war dragged on, a way was sought of honouring regiments as well as individuals. The *Croix de Guerre* was introduced in April 1915 to honour soldiers mentioned in Regimental, Brigade, Division, Corps or Army Orders. Almost a year later, it was decided to award the medal on a collective basis for particular feats of arms by the regiment as a whole. This, it was hoped, would serve to stimulate units to great deeds, as well as providing a method of recognising past feats. It was open to any unit that could be employed independently in action.

It was decided to present a *fourragère* in the red and green of the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre to qualifying regiments. This consisted of a loop of braid worn around the upper arm and shoulder and

Table D: Arm-of-service distinctions on the horizon blue uniform
1 – Metropolitan troops

	Trouser piping	*Collar patch*	*Soutaches*	*Regimental number*
Staff	The colour of the regiment or corps from which they were detached			Lightning bolt
Line infantry	yellow	yellow[1]	dark blue	dark blue
Chasseurs à pied/alpins	yellow	iron grey	yellow[2]	yellow[2]
Cuirassiers	dark blue	dark blue	crimson	crimson
Cuirassiers à pied	dark blue	dark blue	crimson/yellow[3]	crimson
Dragoons	dark blue	dark blue	white	white
Chasseurs à cheval	dark blue	dark blue	green	green
Hussars	dark blue	dark blue	sky blue	sky blue
Field artillery	scarlet	scarlet	light blue	light blue
Foot artillery	scarlet	scarlet	green	green
Horse artillery	scarlet	scarlet	dark blue	dark blue
Heavy artillery	scarlet	scarlet	ash grey	ash grey
Mountain artillery	scarlet	scarlet	white	white
African artillery	scarlet	scarlet	light blue[4]	light blue
Artillerie spéciale	scarlet	scarlet	iron grey	iron grey
Engineers	black	black (velvet for officers)	scarlet	scarlet
Baloon service	orange	black	orange	orange[5]
Aviation service	orange	orange	black	black[5]
Administration –				
Clerks	grey blue[6]	garance	none	bluish iron grey
Medical orderlies	garance[7]	garance	none	caduceus/number[8]
Train	green	green	scarlet	crimson
Service Automobile	green	dark green	none	scarlet letter A
Gendarmerie	white	black	none	white grenade
Supply	grey-blue	grey blue velvet	none	silver acanthus sprig
Service de Santé –				
Doctors	garance	crimson velvet	none	gold caduceus
Chemists	green	green velvet	none	gold caduceus
Veterinaries	garance	garnet red velvet	none	gold sage wreath
G.S. clerks	dark blue grey[7]	grey-blue	none	scarlet

Notes

Officers' numbers were in the button colour

1 yellow collar patches were replaced by horizon blue in April 1915
2 replaced by green November 1915
3 two crimson, and one yellow furthest from the number
4 three soutaches
5 but aircrew wore the appropriate brevet instead of a number
6 changed to grey in October 1915, and to yellow twelve months later
7 changed to yellow in October 1916
8 white caduceus; iron grey section number for non-medically qualified orderlies, light blue for the medically qualified

fixed under the shoulder strap or collar of the greatcoat. It was 85 cm long, each end having a 65 mm long metal tip (white or yellow metal according to the arm of service).

The fourragère could be awarded to any unit with two citations in Army Orders, after a board of senior officers had examined the previous citations and deemed them sufficient to merit the award (regiments already decorated with the Légion d'Honneur – as some had been, from the days of the Second Empire – would qualify after one such citation). The first units to receive it were the 152e Régiment d'Infanterie, the 1er and 22e Bataillons de Chasseurs à Pied, the 8e Régiment de Marche de Tirailleurs, the Régiment de Marche de la Légion Etrangère, and five companies of engineers.

By the start of 1917, this was thought insufficient, since some regiments had received four citations. By an order of April 1917, a fourragère in the yellow and green of the ribbon of the Médaille Militaire, was to be worn instead. It was immediately awarded to the 152e and the Legion's Régiment de Marche, and in July to the Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale de Maroc (R.I.C.M.), for three citations and the Légion d'Honneur awarded for the recapture of Fort Douaumont.

When the Legion regiment was cited for the sixth time, in that same year, it was given a red fourragère, the colour of the ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur.

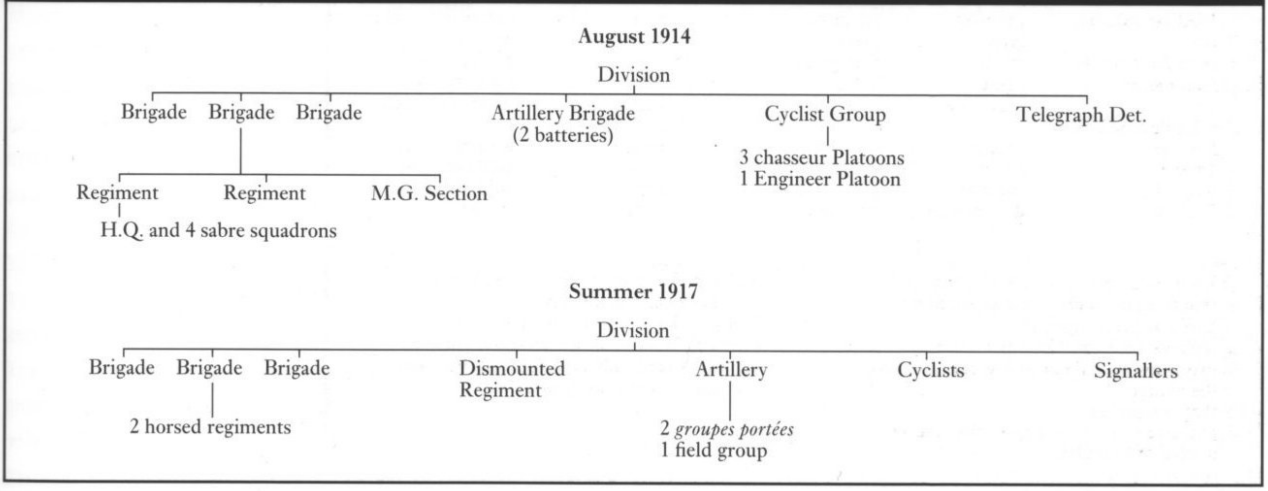
The system was extended in late 1918, so that a double fourragère in red (across the shoulder) and in red and green (around the arm) could be awarded for 9, 10, or 11 citations (provision was made for up to 15 citations, but was never needed). By the end of the war, two units, the Legion and the R.I.C.M., had won the double fourragère, 22 that of the Légion d'Honneur, 129 that of the Médaille Militaire, and 600 that of the Croix de Guerre (including aviation squadrons and ships).

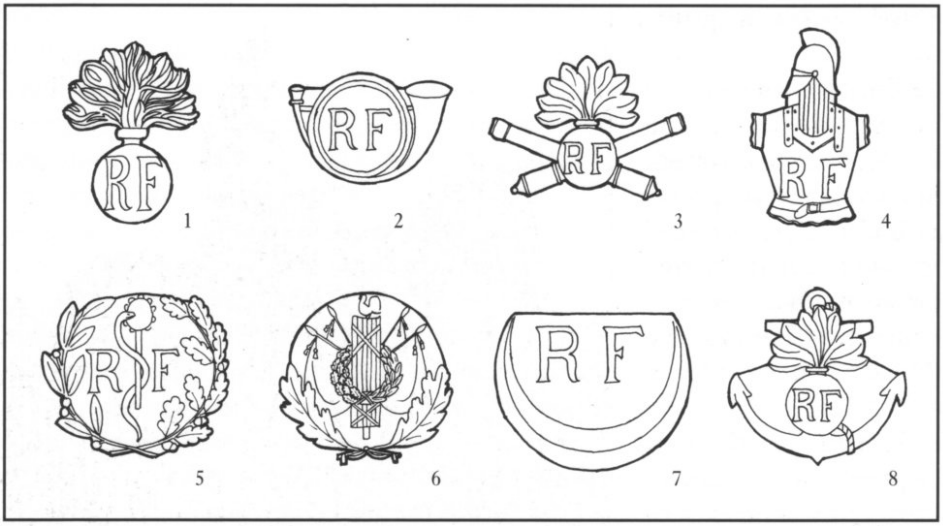
'The ace of diamonds'

Like his uniform, the soldier's individual equipment was also of an old pattern. The 'ace of diamonds' or *as de carreau* (a pun – the word for the pack also being that for diamonds in playing cards) was officially the 1893 pattern pack, but in fact the design had hardly changed since the days of the Second Empire. Made from leather over a rigid wooden frame, it was no longer festooned with tent sections and picket posts, leaving only a pair of off-duty shoes, the 1852 pattern mess tin – posed at such an angle that it did not interfere with the man's head whilst in the prone firing position – an individual tool, and one of the squad's pieces of cooking equipment. The waistbelt held three 1888 or 1905 pattern cartridge pouches and the bayonet frog, supported by the 1892 pattern Y-shaped braces. Over the right shoulder was slung a canvas haversack, and over the left, a one litre water bottle, first issued in 1877.

Experience in the field only served to increase the burden of the infantryman. Rolled blankets and a tent section, complete with cords and pegs, were again strapped to the outside of the pack, although

Organisation of a Cavalry Division


August 1914
Division
Brigade
Brigade
Brigade
Artillery Brigade (2 batteries)
Cyclist Group
Telegraph Det.
Regiment
Regiment
M.G. Section
H.Q. and 4 sabre squadrons
3 chasseur Platoons
1 Engineer Platoon
Summer 1917
Division
Brigade
Brigade
Brigade
Dismounted Regiment
Artillery
Cyclists
Signallers
2 horsed regiments
2 *groupes portées*
1 field group



Devices from the front of the Adrian helmet. 1 all branches, except 2 light infantry, 3 artillery, 4 engineers, 5 medical, 6 supply, 7 zouaves and tirailleurs, 8 Colonial troops.

from 1915, the material of the pack itself was changed from leather to canvas. In the same year, the two litre water bottle, previously issued only to African troops, was supplied to the whole of the Army. 1917 saw the introduction of a new assault order. The pack was now left in the trench, and necessities carried rolled up in the tent section and blanket. The last amendment to the equipment was the introduction of a modified pack in 1917 for members of machine-gun teams. This had an internal metal frame to support the weight of twelve magazines for the Chauchat machine gun. It also incorporated a quick-release buckle on the right shoulder, so it could be dropped quickly when coming into action.

In the cavalry, the only items of personal equipment worn by the trooper were the water-bottle, which was slung over the right shoulder, a natural leather cartridge pouch worn on the belt or on the cuirass strap on the right hand side of the wearer, and, further round on the same side, an 1892 pattern revolver in a natural leather holster. Blanket and greatcoat were carried rolled across the saddle, and a blue saddle blanket underneath.

Gas masks

Poisonous gas, initially chlorine, was first used against French troops on 22 April 1915 on the front between Bixschoote and Langemarck, in Belgium. The first protective response was a gauze pad, issued between May and June 1915, impregnated with hyposulphite and sodium carbonate, and tied around the head with cloth loops. A hood was then tried, but it was made in too light a fabric to be of any use. The first type of pad was succeeded by two others before the end of August, but the only difference between them lay in the form of fastening, replacing the cloth loops with either a broad strip of cotton or an elastic band.

The initial formula proved useless and so, in August 1915, a new hood and pad were introduced. Both the hood, now in thicker fabric, and the pad were impregnated with a solution of soda and castor oil. The new design included three thin metal strips, so that the pad could be fitted better onto the face. All types of pad were carried in a cloth pouch, worn on the front of the waistbelt.

Further revisions of the impregnating formula were introduced almost immediately, first to counteract phosgene, by using sodium thiosulphanate, and then prussic acid gas, using a nickel acetate compound. This last proved the most efficacious, and was used in the new M2 mask of 1916, and the later ARS17 mask of 1918 (ARS=*appareil respiratoire spécial* – special breathing apparatus). These were carried in tins, painted in grey-green, attached to a canvas strap, or sometimes just hung from a string over a cartridge pouch.

Small arms

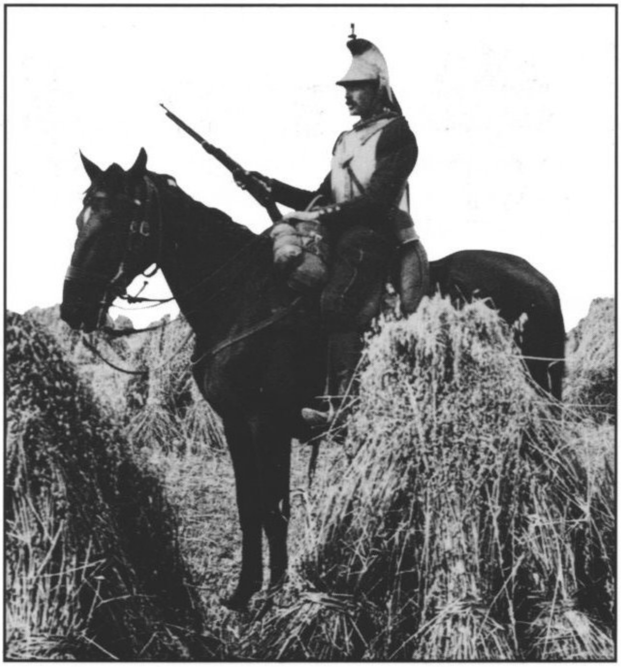
The French Army was ill-served by its small arms manufacturers. It went to war with a rifle which was obsolete within three years of its introduction (though it continued in use until the end of the Second World War), whilst the automatic weapons introduced during the war itself varied in quality from poor to downright awful.

The principal rifle of the French Army was the 1886 Lebel, as modified in 1893. It fired 8 mm cartridges, using the outdated Kropatschek system; and whilst it could hold eight bullets in its magazine, and a ninth up the spout, each bullet had to be loaded individually into a tube magazine under the barrel. The result was an over-long weapon, whose centre of gravity changed with every shot, and which was soon overtaken by the superior Mauser and Mannlicher weapons.

The Lebel was replaced from 1916 by the 1907 Berthier. This was a development of the cavalry carbine, changed to rifle length, and was first issued to Colonial troops from 1907. Early models featured an angled bolt handle (later straightened) but, more importantly, ammunition was loaded in three-round clips. This was an improvement but inadequate in battle conditions and modifications were made in 1916 to provide a five-round magazine.

The bayonet was the fragile 1886 pattern, some 55 cm long and cruciform in section. Although it looked impressive, it had a tendency to snap when being used for useful things such as opening tins.

Like the British Army, the French made no provision for an automatic weapon at squad level in 1914, but soon realised the need for one. The weapon chosen was the 1915 CSRG (from the names of the four manufacturers, Chauchat-Sutter-Ribeyrolles-Gladiator), known as the Chauchat for short. Manufactured in haste from steel stampings, this was a mediocre weapon at best. Lebel ammunition was used for ease of supply, but the gun was very prone to stoppages, partly due to the shape of the cartridges, which required the 20-round magazines to be semi-circular, so preventing a smooth feed. The ensemble was also heavy. The gun itself was relatively light at nine kilos (its sole virtue), but the ammunition weighed a further 36. This was at first distributed between the team of two, who carried it in addition to all their personal equipment; but by spring 1918, the team had been strengthened by two extra ammo carriers.



A cuirassier on outpost duty. Little concession has been made to the conditions of modern warfare although the helmet is in a cover and the finish on the cuirass has been dulled.

The main heavy automatic weapon was the 1914 pattern Hotchkiss machine gun (originally introduced in 1897) which was fed by strips of 30 rounds rather than by belts. Members of the teams carrying these guns were burdened with carrying the gun itself, broken up into the barrel and the tripod components (nearly 24 kilos altogether), plus the ammunition. As a concession to this extra weight, machine gunners were armed only with pistols instead of rifles. The 1905 pattern Puteaux was an attempt to improve on the Hotchkiss, but in fact made it worse. The 1907 pattern St Etienne tried to improve on the Puteaux, but to no effect; it was a total disaster – prone to overheating, and using an over-complicated mechanism. Both were speedily dropped and relegated to fortress work or sent to the colonies.

The cavalry retained their sturdy 1890 pattern 8 mm carbine throughout the war. It was provided with a bayonet, except in the dragoons, who, presumably because they were equipped with a lance, were thought not to need one. The sword (either the modified 1854 pattern in the heavy cavalry or the modified 1822 pattern in the light cavalry) was hung from the saddle on the left, and the carbine, muzzle down, in a natural leather scabbard on the right. Cavalry officers, NCOs, trumpeters, machine-gunners and pioneers carried the sword and an 1892 pattern revolver only.

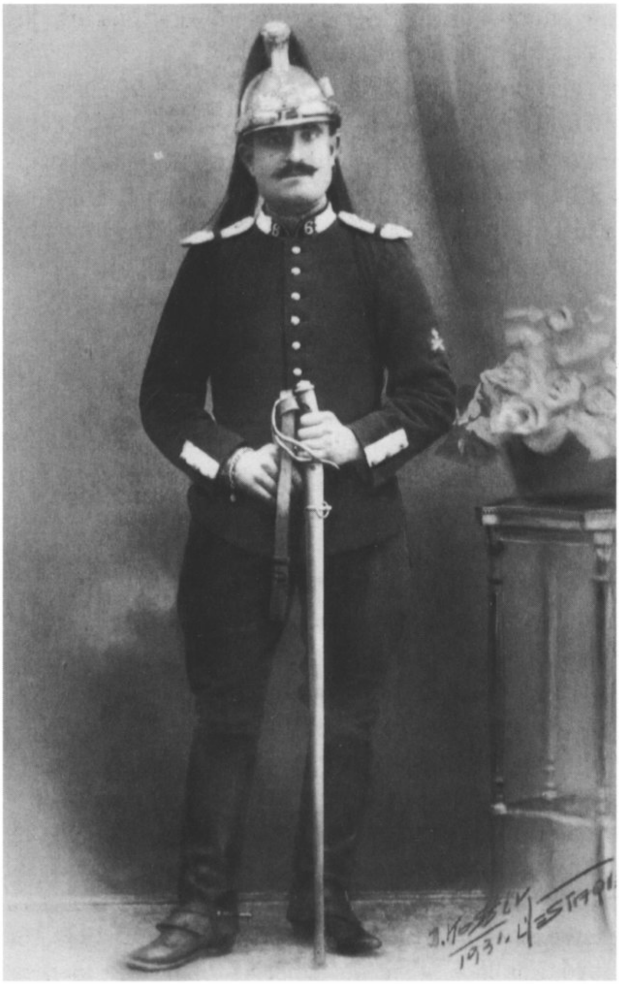
A decision had been taken in 1883 to equip dragoon regiments with a lance, and this was extended to some regiments of chasseurs à cheval in 1912. The following chasseur regiments are thought to have received them by February 1915 – 13e, 14e, 15e, 17e, and 18e. The lance was slung from the right arm. Early models were of bamboo, but a steel pattern was introduced in 1913. No pennants were worn during wartime. Officers, senior NCOs, trumpeters, machine gunners, drivers and farrier NCOs were not equipped with the lance, and carried only a revolver and sword.

TACTICS AND TRENCHES

The cult of the offensive

The high visibility of the French uniforms of 1914 contributed to over half a million casualties in the first five months of war. Yet tactics played a far greater part. Officers at the *Ecole de Guerre*, the Staff College, had studied the war of 1870 to identify French mistakes, and came to the conclusion that the French, having surrendered the strategic, tactical and moral initiative to the enemy, were defeated almost before they took the field. To counter this, it was suggested that in future conflicts a French army should launch attacks immediately on all fronts, so forcing the enemy to stretch his own resources to breaking point in trying to repulse them. Espoused by a group of vocal officers with a flair for publicity, notably a Colonel de Grandmaison, these ideas fell into a policy vacuum, and were taken up by an officer corps eager for any kind of firm lead. Some of Grandmaison's statements make strange reading now: 'In the offensive imprudence is the best of assurances . . . Let us go even to excess, and that perhaps will not be far enough . . . In the attack only two things are necessary: to know where the enemy is, and to decide what to do. What the enemy intends to do is of no consequence.'

Indifference to the enemy's intentions permitted a tactical approach with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer (there was to be no firing in the advance: the first order was to fix bayonets, the second to charge) – mass formations of French soldiers made an easy target over the rolling hills of Champagne, Artois and Alsace (and would probably have done so whatever the colour of their uniform).



A dragoon of the 6e RD. The badge on his sleeve is that of the machine gun section.

The emphasis on mobility and attack left the artillery at a disadvantage. A first-class field gun had been developed in the shape of the 75 mm cannon, which could regularly fire 10–15 rounds a minute. In contrast, little emphasis had been placed on heavy artillery or howitzers, until French trials and reports from the Balkan Wars showed that heavy artillery could be moved relatively easily. However, little thought had been given as to their use in mobile warfare. Combined with parsimonious funding, this left the French completely out-gunned in heavier weapons by the Germans in 1914.

The deciding factor, according to Grandmaison and his Young Turks, would not be weaponry, but the morale of the combatants. Always taking the offensive, driving the enemy before them, would guarantee French victory, since attack was the natural French way to conduct war – the *furia francese* revisited. In pursuit of this notion, however, perhaps as many as two-thirds of infantry officers in action in 1914 became casualties. It soon became patently obvious that what worked in pre-war manoeuvres did not work on the battlefield. Joffre ruthlessly sacked many incompetent senior officers in the first campaigns – or rather transferred them to the Headquarters of the Rear Area at Limoges (the verb *limoger* meaning to sack). New tactics had to be worked out to break the stalemate of trench warfare.

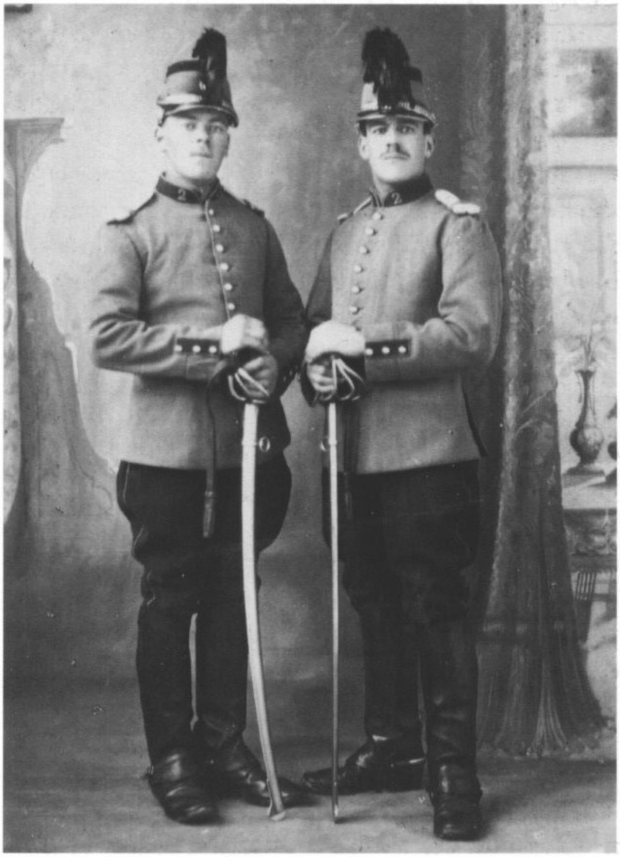
New weapons, new tactics

The evolution of new tactics was aided by a new weapon, the Vivien-Bessières rifle grenade, an accurate 'bullet-through' weapon, which greatly increased the firepower of the platoon. The first wave of an attack of 1916–17 was to consist of alternate riflemen and bombers, each platoon taking up a frontage of 90 metres, and behind this line, a second consisting of bombers and rifle grenadiers. Thirty metres behind that was a line of moppers-up. Perhaps 50 metres behind them came the other two platoons of the company, with rifle grenadiers towards the flanks and in the centre of the formation. The first wave was to take the first line of enemy trenches and then carry on, with the main objective of gaining ground; the moppers-up took possession of the trench, bombed their way along the traverses, and reduced any strong points. The second wave acted as a reserve, and could pass through the first to maintain the momentum of the attack. In addition, each regiment had a section of three 37 mm guns, which were to be manhandled forward with the attacking troops to provide mobile close support (these were later partially replaced by improved trench mortars). These formations were to be supported by creeping barrages (a French invention) and artillery concentrations, but the former usually moved too quickly and that, together with the usual hazards of uncut wire, counter-bombardment and counter-attack made each attack no less of a lottery.

French tanks (two types of heavy tank were produced, the Schneider and St Chamond) frequently found themselves attacking alone, often due to poor liaison with the infantry, or after German counter-bombardments killed the supports. Built more as gun carriers than mobile strong points, their further employment was hampered by their no more than partial success in the failed Nivelle offensive of 1917, and tanks came to be seen by the French not as a weapon of breakthrough, but merely in terms of infantry support – an attitude which was to have dire consequences in 1940.

In and out of the trenches

French trench systems were similar in most respects to those of other nations, consisting at the very front line of a firing trench and a covering trench 15 metres behind. Some 50–70 metres behind that, and connected by communications trenches, was the support trench, where company HQ was situated; and behind that, the reserve trench, with Battalion HQ and self-contained redoubts. More flexible systems could be used where the ground warranted. During 1916 in the Bois des Caures in front of Verdun, the front line



Two troopers from the 2e Chasseurs à Cheval. The plume would be detached in the field.

was held by small outposts, backed up by *Grandes Gardes*, platoon-sized redoubts; further back was the S, or support, line, and behind that the R line of concrete redoubts. The flexible system used by the Germans, and later by the British, was not introduced into French defensive systems until the summer of 1918.

French trenches, like so much else, were more frequently governed by the D system (D from *on se débrouillera toujours* – we'll always muddle through). This stipulated that anything that could not be done right away would get done sooner or later. Shortages of reveting material led to many trenches collapsing under the weight of tons of wet mud and water, the situation remaining unchanged until someone came up with the wood or concrete.

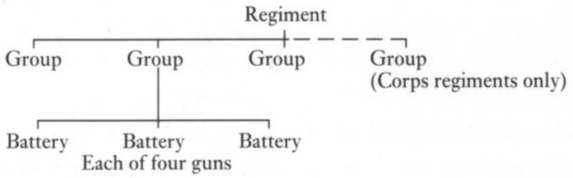
The details of daily life in the trenches have been described many times elsewhere. At first, there was no set period of duty. Divisions generally had to wait until one third of their effectives had become casualties before being relieved. Having marched out of the line, 'rest camps' provided no real rest at all. The best accommodation was usually already taken by rear area troops, and the men were expected to make their own sanitary, sleeping and messing arrangements. Frequently, the rest areas turned out to be shelled-out villages still within range of the German artillery. The only person who welcomed the influx of troops was the local café proprietor, who could guarantee to sell a lot of wine. Leave was not an entitlement, but a favour, which was only grudgingly granted. A man on leave had to make his own way to the railway station, where there might, or might not, be a train to take him where he wanted to go, and all too frequently men found themselves unable to get any further than Paris, where they were harassed from pillar to post by the police and provosts.

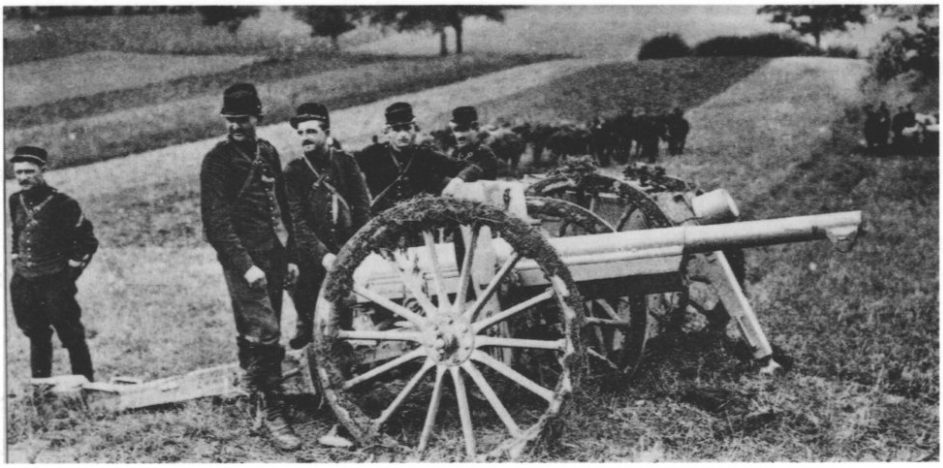
Discipline

The historian Alistair Horne comments on the extent of the gulf which he finds existed between officers and men, yet some contemporary British and Canadian observers disagreed, and noted how friendly relations were between the two. One must assume that the situation differed between units, but there certainly seems to have been less of a caste spirit in the French Army than in its German and British counterparts.

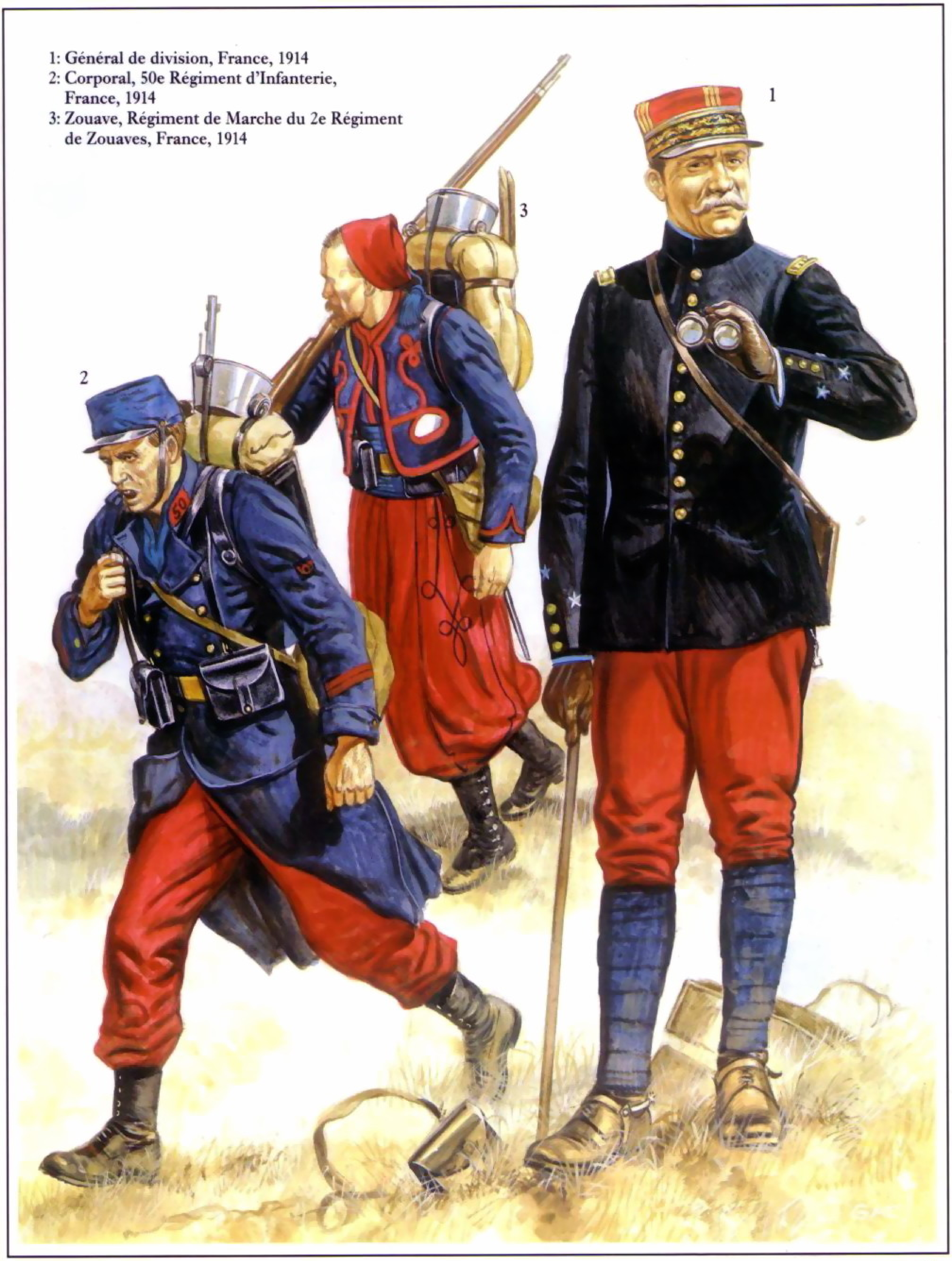
Yet the fact remains that the French Army mutinied on a large scale, whilst the British Army did not. A rising tide of indiscipline affected the Army throughout 1916, when virtually every infantry regiment spent time at Verdun; but the final straw was the Nivelle Offensive of March 1917. Poor rest and leave facilities, poor and monotonous food (the stringy ration meat was mordantly nicknamed *singe* – monkey), and the feeling that their lives were being wasted in futile assaults by a callous General Staff

Organisation of an artillery Regiment, 1914





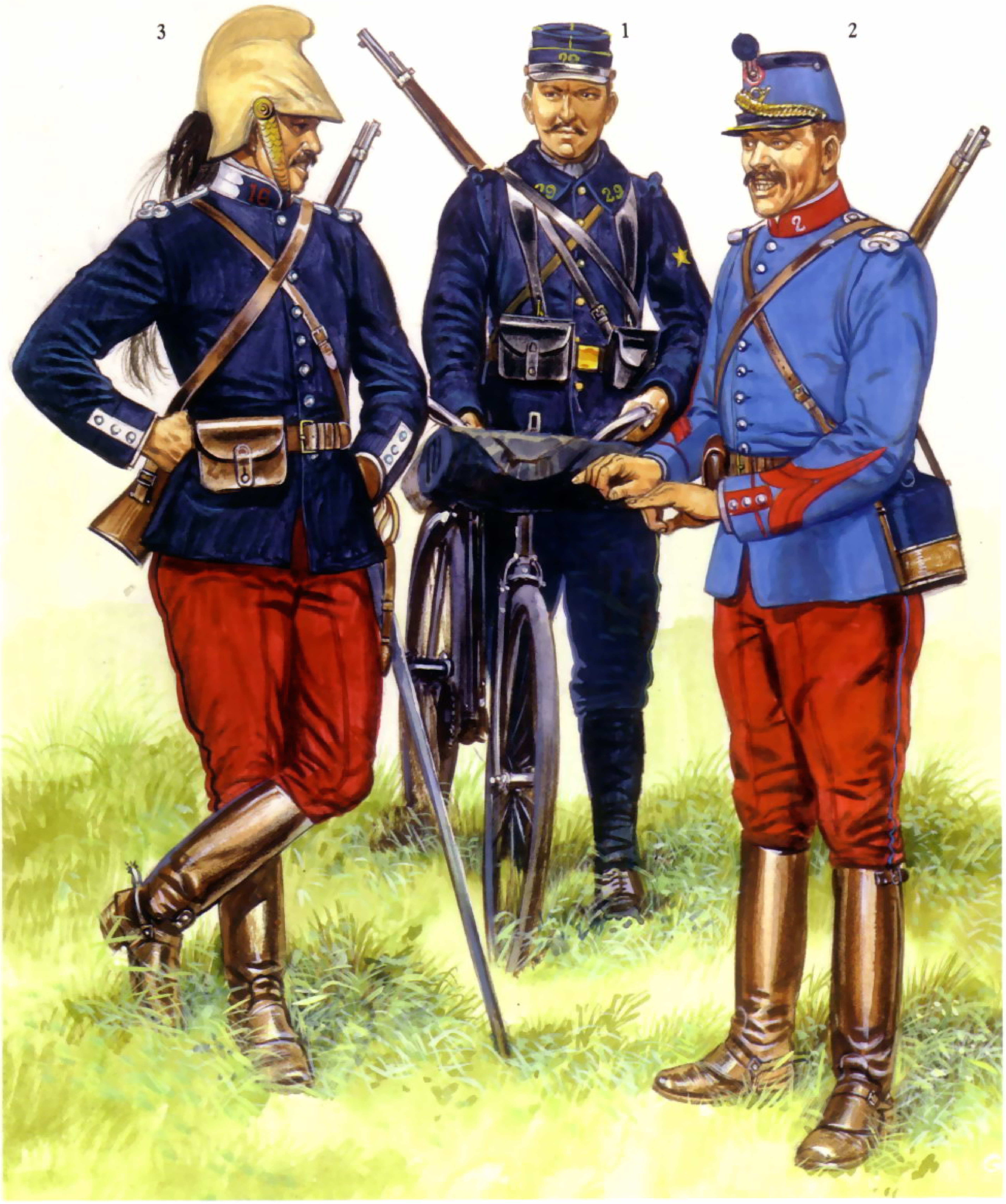
A line of 75 mm field guns drawn up in pre-war manoeuvres. The caisson is by the gun's left wheel; the horses and limbers are drawn up some yards behind.



1: Général de division, France, 1914
2: Corporal, 50e Régiment d'Infanterie, France, 1914
3: Zouave, Régiment de Marche du 2e Régiment de Zouaves, France, 1914

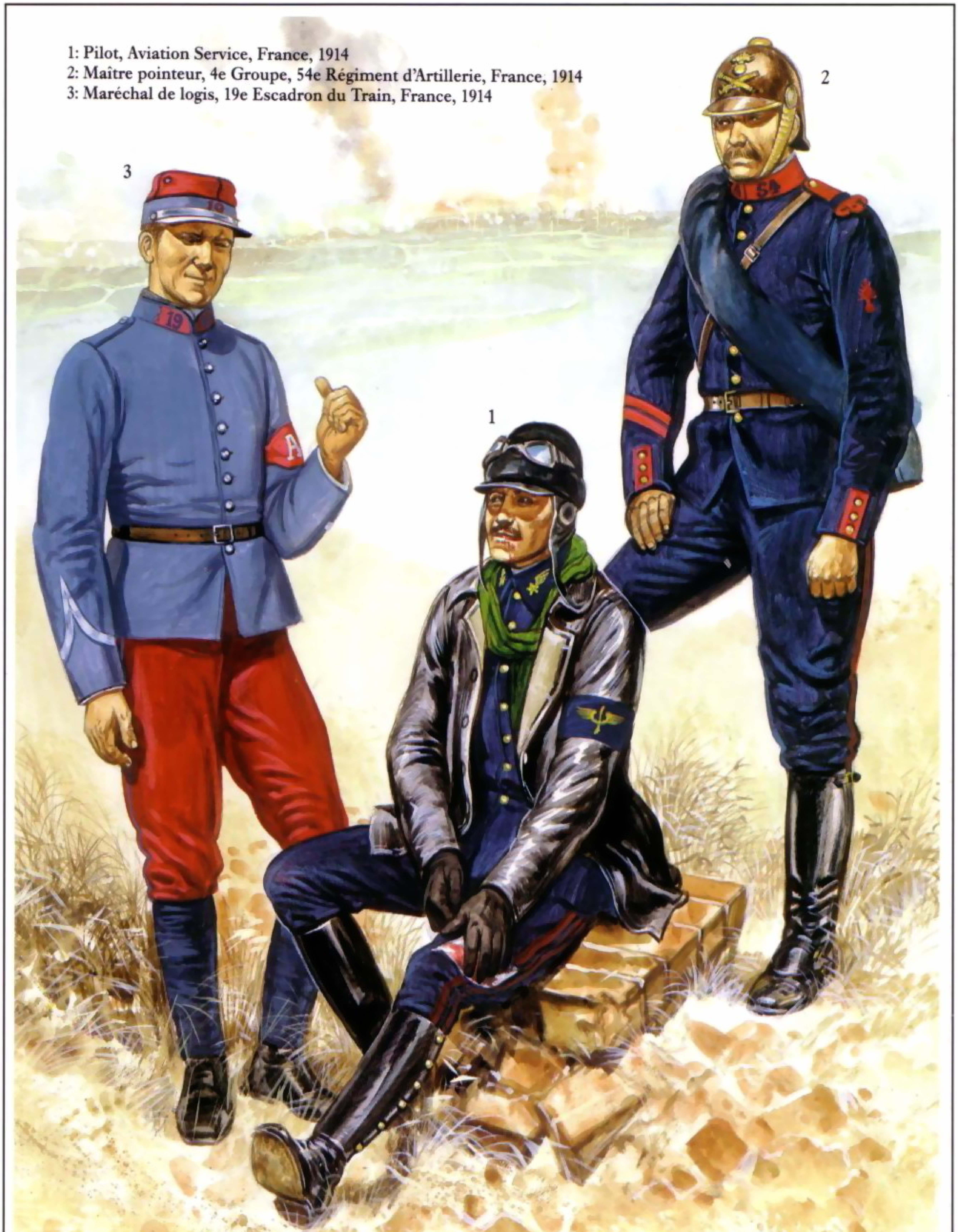
A

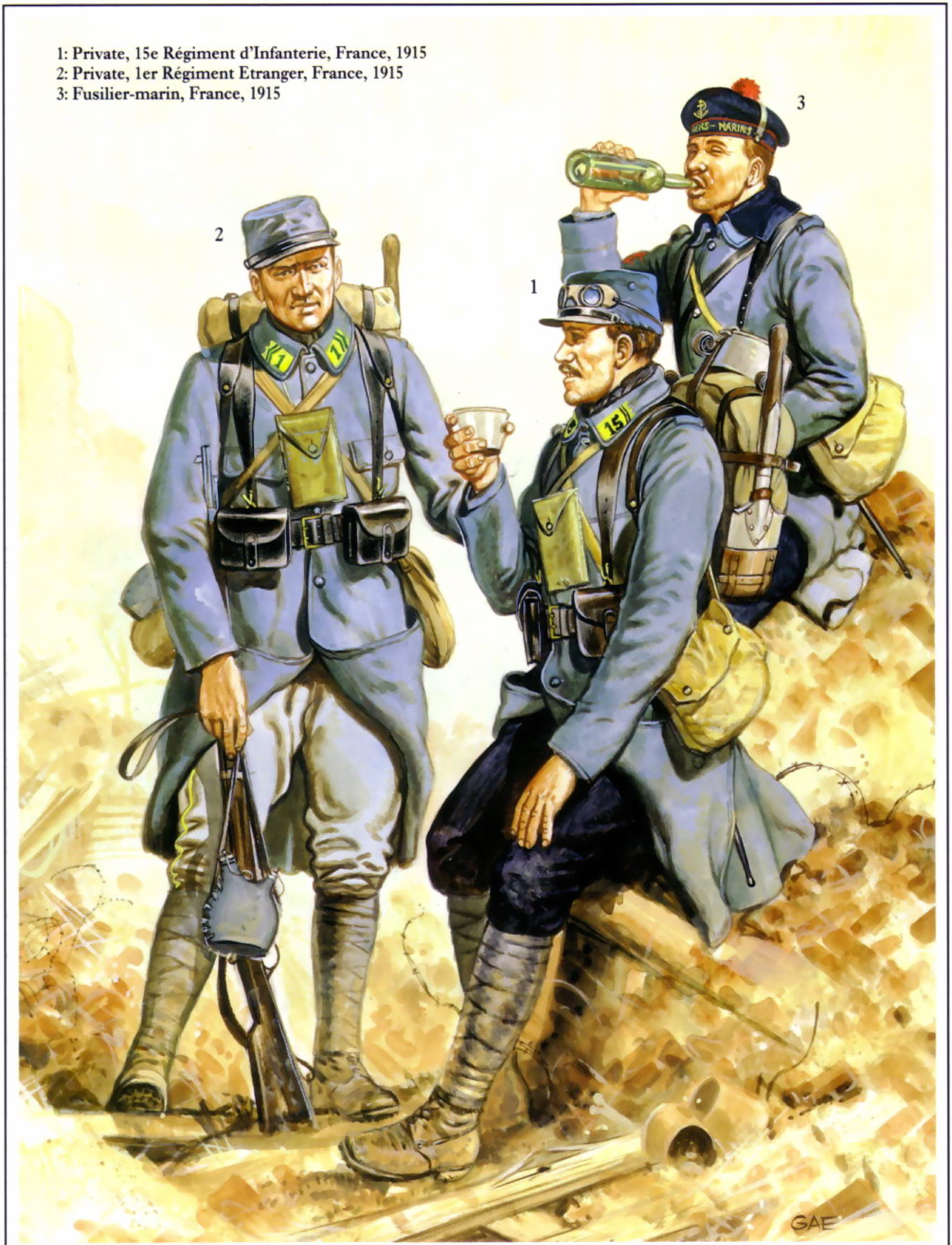
1: Chasseur cyclist, 29e Bataillon de Chasseurs à Pied, France, 1914
2: Brigadier, 2e Régiment de Chasseurs à Cheval, France, 1914
3: Trooper, 16e Régiment de Dragoons, France, 1914



B

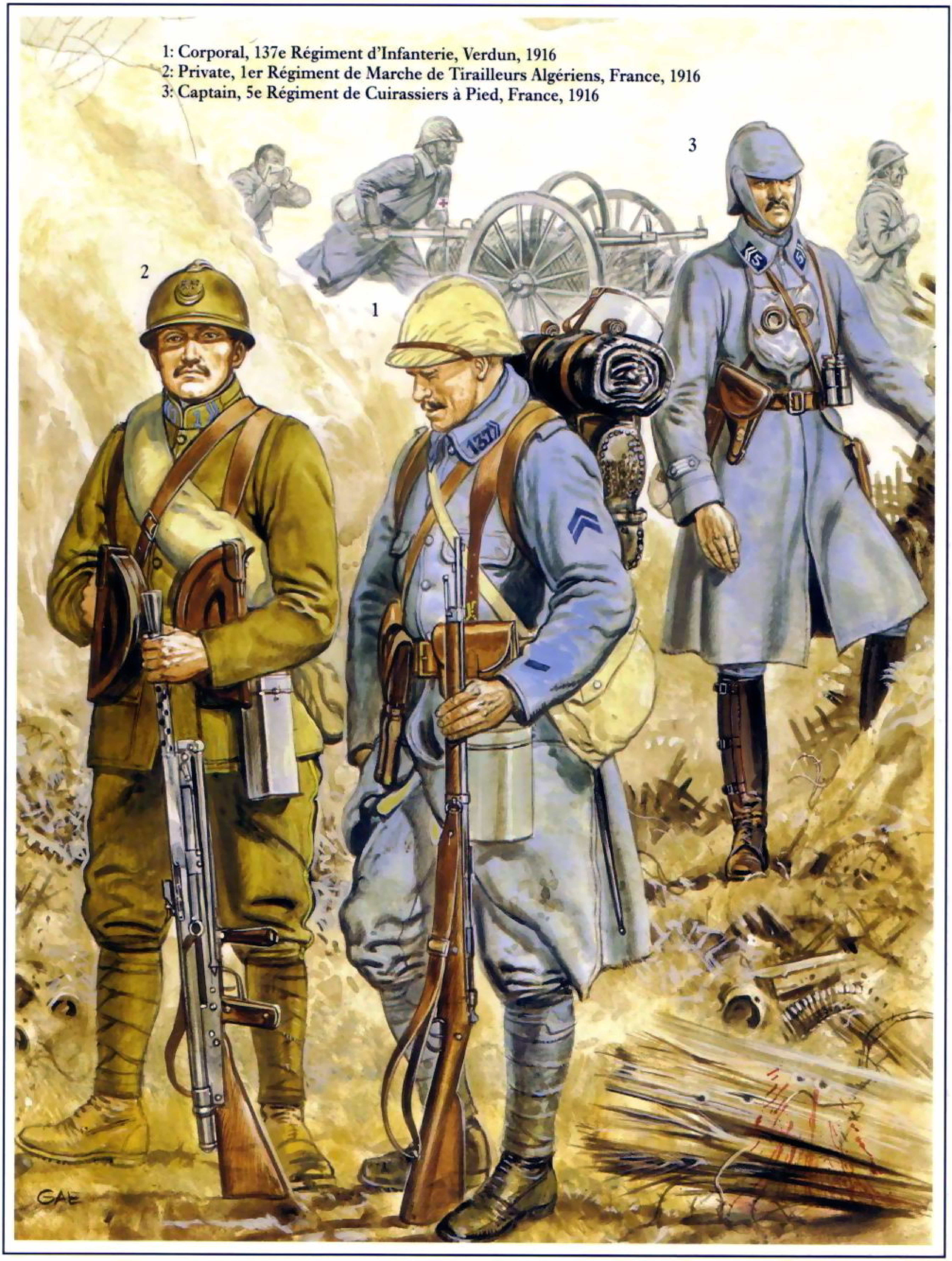
1: Pilot, Aviation Service, France, 1914
2: Maître pointeur, 4e Groupe, 54e Régiment d'Artillerie, France, 1914
3: Maréchal de logis, 19e Escadron du Train, France, 1914




2
1
3
15
1
GENS-MARINS
GAE

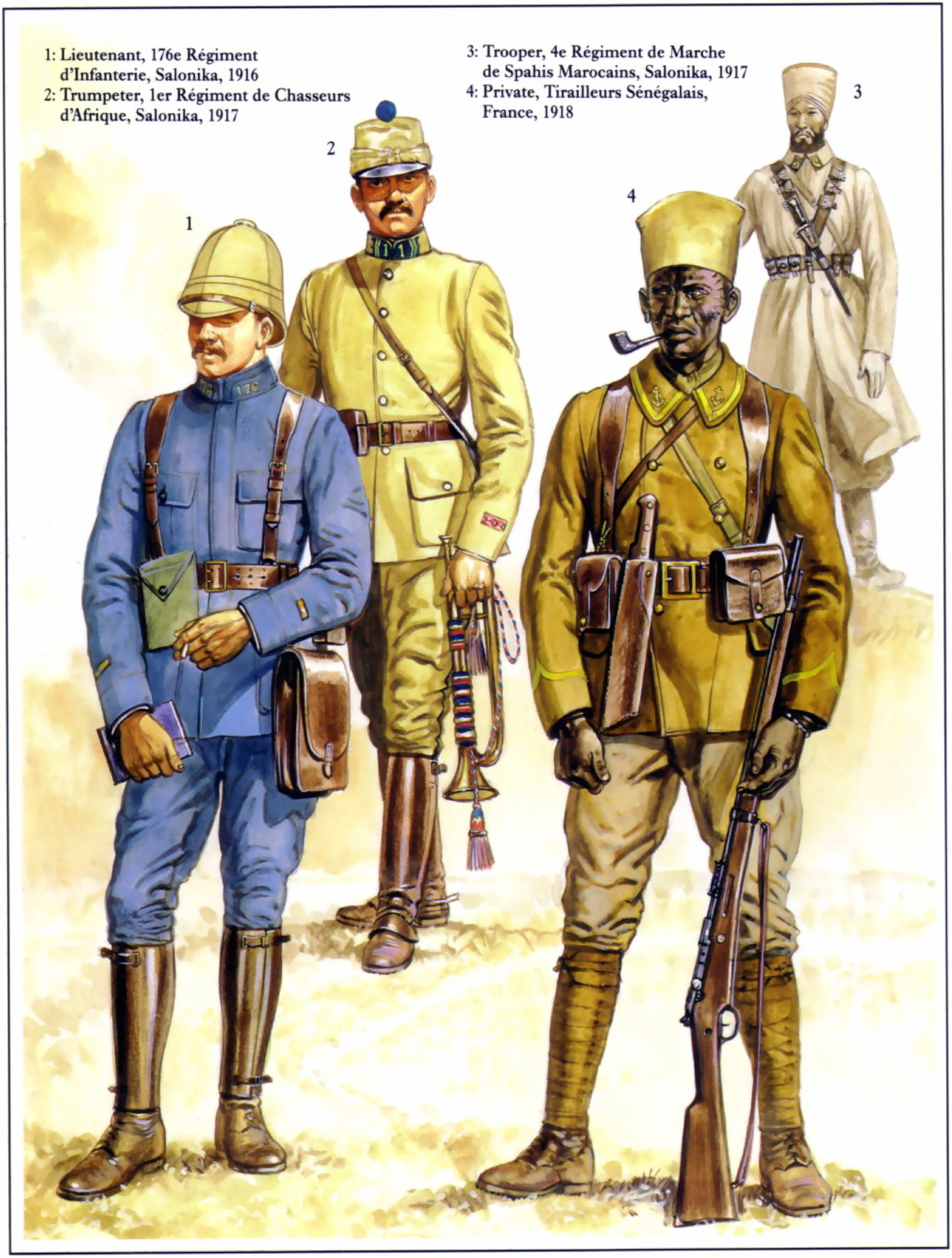
1: Private, 15e Régiment d'Infanterie, France, 1915
2: Private, 1er Régiment Etranger, France, 1915
3: Fusilier-marin, France, 1915

D

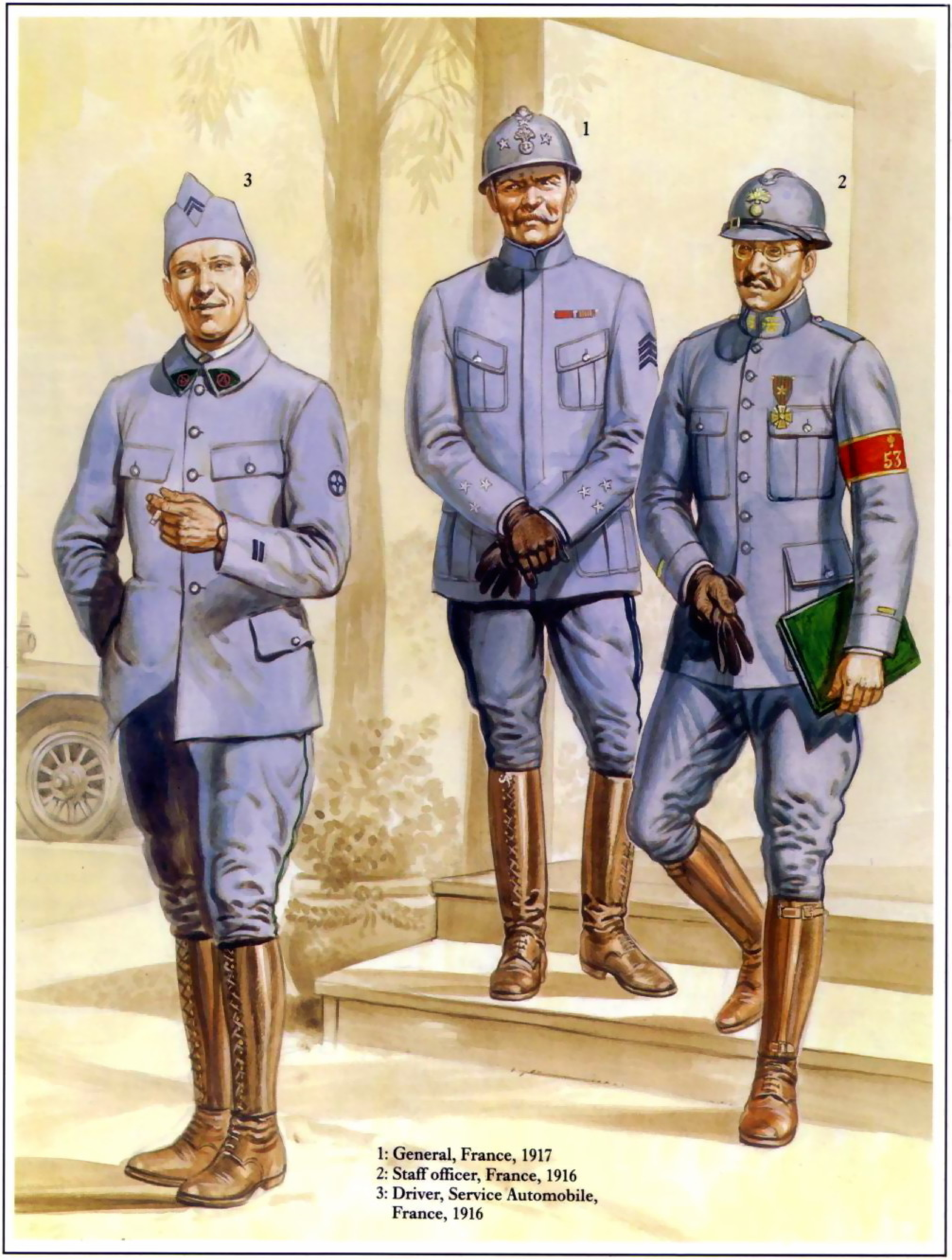


1: Corporal, 137e Régiment d'Infanterie, Verdun, 1916
2: Private, 1er Régiment de Marche de Tirailleurs Algériens, France, 1916
3: Captain, 5e Régiment de Cuirassiers à Pied, France, 1916

E

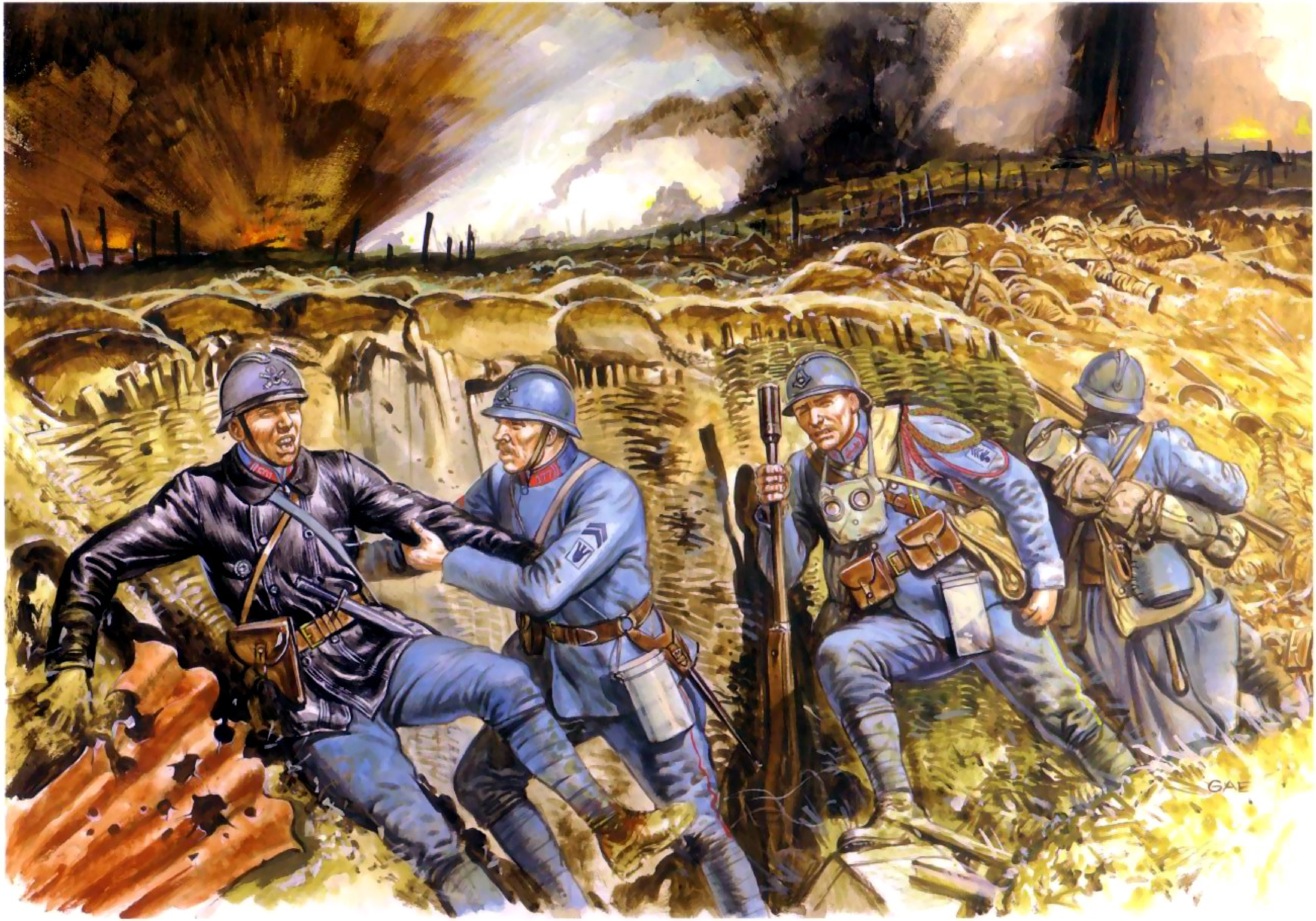

1: Lieutenant, 176e Régiment d'Infanterie, Salonika, 1916
2: Trumpeter, 1er Régiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique, Salonika, 1917
3: Trooper, 4e Régiment de Marche de Spahis Marocains, Salonika, 1917
4: Private, Tirailleurs Sénégalais, France, 1918

F



1: General, France, 1917
2: Staff officer, France, 1916
3: Driver, Service Automobile, France, 1916

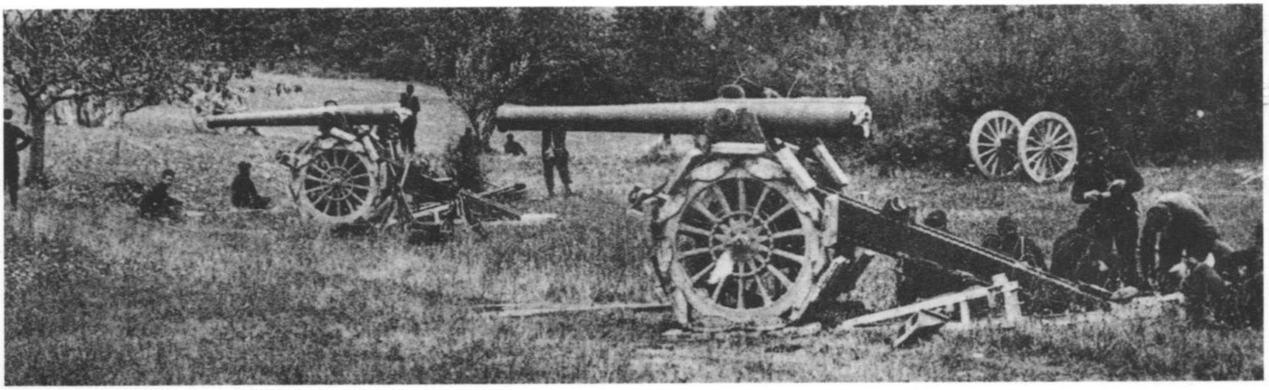
H



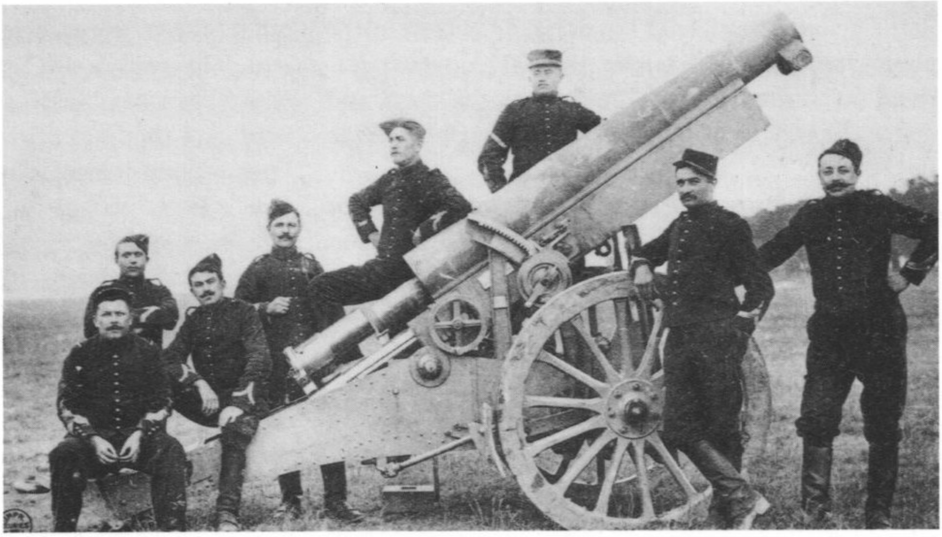
2: Private, Artillerie Spéciale, France, 1918

1: Private, 177e Régiment d'Artillerie, France, 1918

3: Private, Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc, France, 1918



Above: A battery of the ungainly looking 1877 pattern long 155 mm Bange heavy artillery pieces. The guns all have a ramp behind their wheels to help absorb the recoil.



A short 155 mm Le Rimailho.

brought matters to a head. Much was made at the time, and has been since, of the connections between the mutinies and the coming Russian Revolution; certainly pacifists and socialists from Paris spread their ideals amongst the mutineers, and some mutineers were genuine believers in that cause. However, many outbreaks of 'collective indiscipline' (as it was later termed) were protests against the conduct of the war, not against the war itself – and part of a strong French tradition (which continues today) of direct action against perceived injustice. The fact that regiments stayed in the trenches to fight off German attacks, although they would not attack themselves, is some indication of this. Quieter areas of the Front, such as the Vosges, were unaffected; mutinies occurred almost exclusively on the Chemin des Dames front, and only after the failure of the offensive (there was also a mutiny in Salonika, which had the same roots as those on the Western Front).

The reforms of Pétain brought a vast improvement to the lot of the *poilu* or ordinary soldier. He ordered the immediate construction of rest camps with barrack blocks containing proper beds and bath and laundry facilities. Rest was to be just that; work was banned for the first four days of each rest period and then only gradually reintroduced. Further, the sale of wine was controlled to reduce the amount of drunkenness. Pétain also greatly increased and formalised the leave entitlement, providing transport to and from the rest camps to the railheads, and established canteens, cheap lodging and eating facilities at the stations, both in the Zone of the Armies and outside. These restorative measures gradually had their effect, and the Army as a whole was better for them.

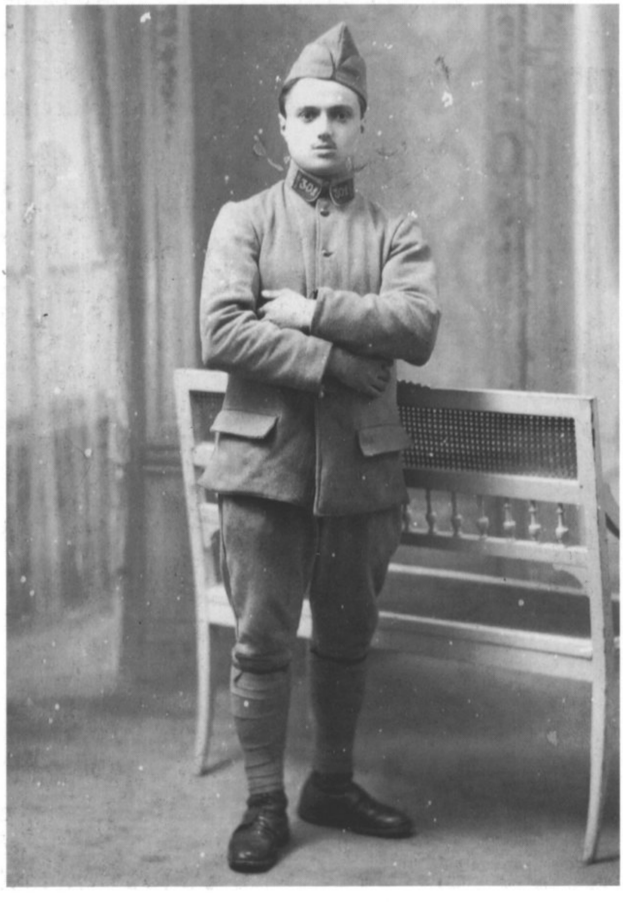
The best units recovered in time for the final advance to victory in 1918, but many did not, and it would appear that morale was brittle in many formations right up to the end. Well might Pétain have said that he was waiting for the Americans.

THE PLATES

A1: Général de division, France, 1914

He is wearing the relatively simple service dress for French senior officers, consisting of a tunique with gilt buttons and gilt embroidered epaulette straps, and breeches with leather leggings and ankle boots. His rank is displayed in the stars on his sleeve, and in his general officers' képi. The latter bears an additional line of silver braid indicating that the wearer is a général de division commanding an Army Corps. Some generals preferred the dolman, as seen in the photograph of de Castelnau on page 3, which featured seven rows of black braid across the chest, and narrow lines of black braid in an Austrian knot on the sleeves.

General officers of cavalry divisions could wear the appropriate helmet. The cavalry manteau was preferred to the greatcoat by many generals, no matter what their original arm, and the stars of rank were placed on its collar, rather than the cuffs.



A private of the 301e RA, in horizon blue, and wearing the bonnet de police.

A2: Corporal, 50e Régiment d'Infanterie, France, 1914

It is perhaps only details, such as the képi cover and the absence of epaulettes, that mark this man out from the infantryman of 1870. He is wearing a marksman's badge on the left sleeve.

In theory, officers should have worn a vareuse in the same cloth as the men's greatcoats, to render them less conspicuous. But the effect was nullified by many officers who wore it in the same black as the tunic it had replaced, with gold wire embroidered distinctions. It was never universally popular, and other officers wore a black veste, or a soldier's greatcoat. They wore a similar type of képi to the men, but with a black band instead of blue, the number in gold wire, and the lines of dark blue piping replaced by lines of gold braid. Where a képi cover was worn, then a hole was cut in the front, so that the braid remained visible. In service dress, breeches were preferred to trousers – both with a 45 mm wide black stripe on the outside. They were tucked into leather leggings and ankle boots. Many territorial officers had been issued with the vareuse on its introduction in 1911, but they considered this a blow to their prestige, and few wore it.

Certain line infantry regiments in the XIV and XV Army Corps areas (namely the 97e, 157e, 158e and 159e, and their reserve regiments) were equipped slightly differently from the rest, in a fashion more suited to their Alpine garrisons. The 97e was dressed exactly like the chasseurs alpins (*see* below), but with *garance* trousers instead of grey-blue; rank badges were also in line infantry style, and the badge on the beret was a garance grenade. The other regiments had a service dress which consisted of the beret, a blue jersey and cummerbund, puttees and mountain boots, but were otherwise dressed as line infantry. These regiments formed the 44th Infantry Division on the outbreak of war.

A3: Zouave, Régiment de Marche du 2e Régiment de Zouaves, France, 1914

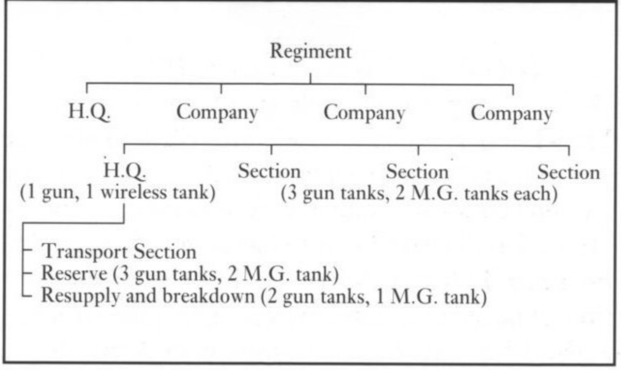
The uniform, like that of the line infantry, had also changed little since the middle of the 19th century. The zouaves abandoned the cotton uniforms normally worn in the North African summer, and adopted their African winter uniforms for the European campaign. The headgear is the chéchia, sometimes worn with a cover of blue cloth, in a shade similar to that of the line infantry's képi cover, issued from September 1914. The rest of the uniform consisted of a short, collarless jacket, with a coloured loop (*tombo*) in the braid to distinguish the four zouave regiments (garance, white, jonquil yellow and light blue respectively). This was worn over a sleeveless vest (*sédria*) in the same colours, and around the waist was a broad cummerbund. Both white cotton or garance cloth baggy *sarouel* trousers were worn in France; but because of their high visibility, they were often replaced in the field by patterns in dark blue cloth or corduroy, tucked into dark blue puttees.

All these pieces of clothing were gradually replaced by khaki items from as early as November 1914. Battalions remaining in North Africa retained the pre-war uniform for rather longer. Territorial regiments had tombos of the jacket colour, with the regimental number in white. Eventually these too went into khaki. Their collar patches then had no soutaches of braid, and white numbers.

Zouaves had customarily carried a bigger pack than metropolitan troops, since in Africa, they could never be sure where the next water or food was coming from, and so had to carry it with them. Regulations stated that the tent section and pickets normally carried in North Africa were not necessary for a European campaign. Nevertheless they were often included. Equipment was usually black, except for the shoulder straps, which were natural leather. Exceptionally, these were worn under the jacket, as were the straps for the water-bottle and haversack, even though those of the pack were not. It was customary in these regiments for the ammunition pouches to be worn more towards the centre of the waist than was the practice in the line infantry. The water bottle remained the two litre African issue, rather than the one litre version of metropolitan troops.

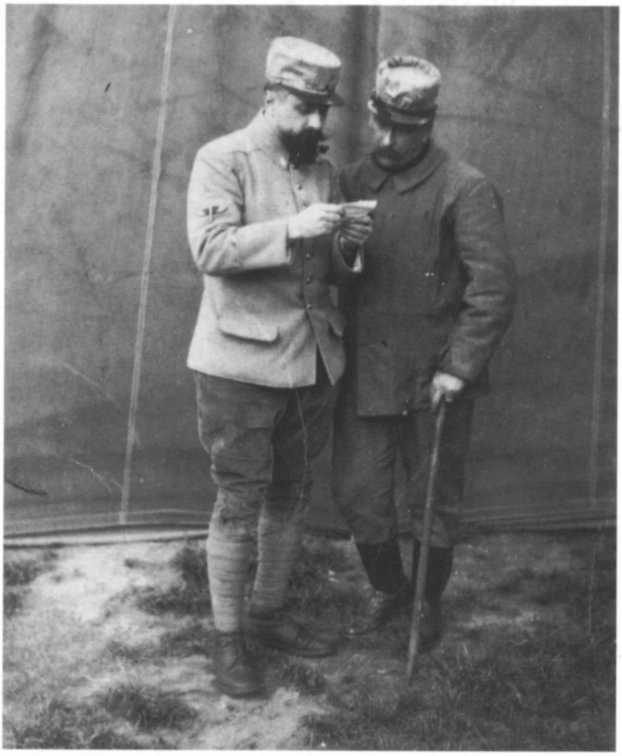
The 2e Zouaves formed a régiment de marche in 1914, consisting of its 1st and 5th regular Battalions and a reserve battalion raised on the mainland.

Organisation of a tank Regiment, 1918

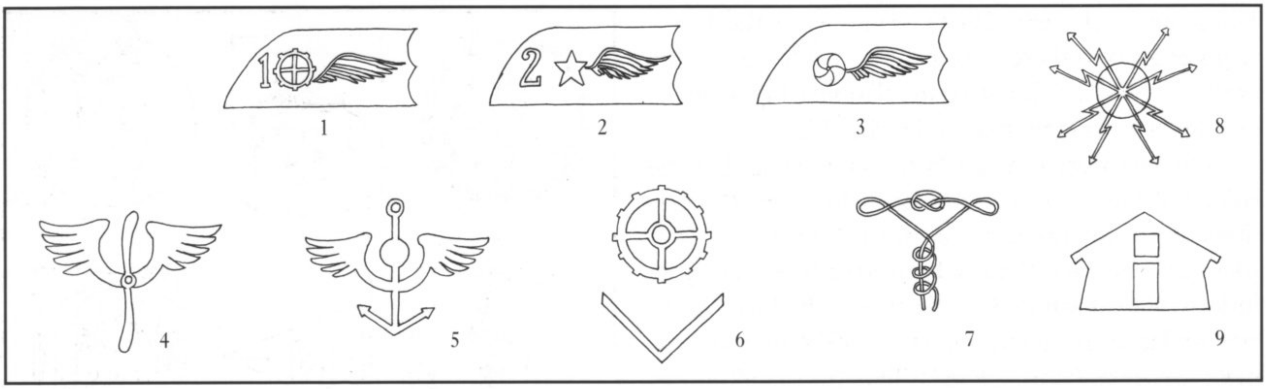

Regiment
H.Q.
Company
Company
Company
H.Q.
(1 gun, 1 wireless tank)
Section
Section
Section
(3 gun tanks, 2 M.G. tanks each)
Transport Section
Reserve (3 gun tanks, 2 M.G. tank)
Resupply and breakdown (2 gun tanks, 1 M.G. tank)

B1: Chasseur cyclist, 29e Bataillon de Chasseurs à Pied, France, 1914

In style at least, the uniform of the chasseurs à pied was similar to that of the line infantry, but in dark blue with jonquil distinctions (regimental tradition prevented the use of the word yellow in describing the colour; likewise, the word red was almost totally banned, as the distinction of mere line infantry, and the phrase 'cherry blue' – *bleu cerise* – had to be used instead). Their equipment was the same as that of the line infantry, but all metal parts were of white metal rather than brass. Although they were described as light infantrymen, this concept was scarce reflected



A staged photo, but one depicting an NCO of the Aviation Service on the left. He is wearing a horizon blue képi, and corduroy trousers.



Aviation badges, 1 balloon crew collar patch; 2 aircraft crew collar badge; 3 mechanic (with the appropriate number); 4 aircrew arm badge; 5 balloon crew arm badge (both 4 and 5 were in red, red with gold feathers or in gold, according to rank); 6 qualified mechanic; 7 rigger; 8 electrician; 9 hangar rigger.

in the weight of each man's load, since the individual equipment was the same as that of the line infantry. Alpine troops also carried a wooden alpenstock on their packs.

The uniform of the chasseurs alpins was a modified version of that of the chasseurs, with a large beret instead of a képi. A hunting horn badge (worn above the right eye) was cut from yellow cloth (gold wire for officers). The veste was replaced by a *vareuse-dolman*, in heavier cloth, with a wide collar and turned-back cuffs, but otherwise carrying the usual chasseur distinctions. It was produced in bluish iron grey from September 1914 and this pattern was worn for the rest of the war, except for a brief period between November 1915 and March 1916, when a horizon blue version was produced. The strong regimental spirit of the chasseurs condemned the new version to universal unpopularity, and it was quickly withdrawn.

A soldier of the 20e Escadron du Train poses at the side of his Delahaye lorry. All vehicles, including guns and limbers, were painted light blue grey.

Cyclist groups were three companies strong, and attached to cavalry divisions. Their equipment was the same as for the alpine battalions, except that the vareuse-dolman was modified to store a waterproof cape under the collar at the rear, and the képi was worn, with the number of the group's parent battalion(s). Individual equipment was also similar, except that the water-bottle and haversack were worn over the right and left shoulders respectively. The cycles were folding types, designed by a Lieutenant Gérard in 1893, weighing 14.5 kg, and could be carried on the soldier's back if necessary (regulation whilst in action). They were armed with the infantry rifle. Attached to the group was a section of engineers, acting as pioneers, who wore the same uniform with scarlet instead of jonquil distinctions, and who were armed with the 1892 artillery carbine.

B2: Brigadier, 2e Régiment de Chasseurs à Cheval, France, 1914

The short shako was worn by most regiments, except for the 5e, which was equipped with a new helmet, due for distribution to all regiments in 1914, but delayed by the war. The general appearance of the helmet was similar to that of the cuirassiers and dragoons. It had a steel skull, with a brass crest and front plate. On the front plate was a white metal hunting horn on a background of rays. The feather plume and tail were also the same as in the heavy regiments, but there was no brush plume on the crest. The chinscales were overlapping brass pieces on a leather backing, tied under the chin.

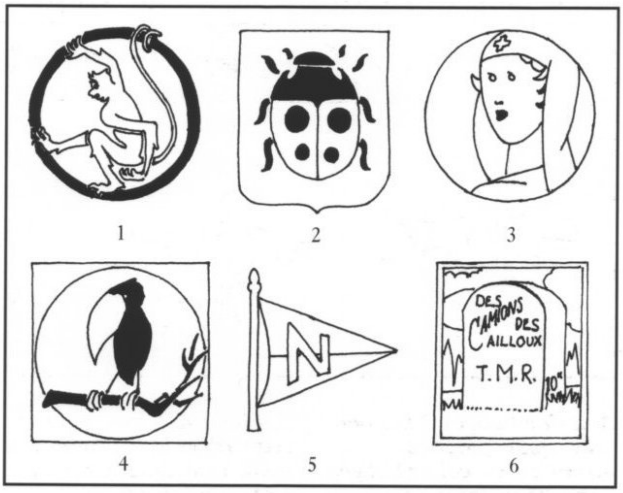
Officers were dressed in the same style, but the colour of the tunic was markedly different. Regulations called for the sky blue worn by the men, but photographs show the shade to have been very pale indeed, almost white. On the shako, the black braid was replaced by silver, whilst the 1914 pattern helmets were probably plated. The tunic collar was deeper and stiffer than that of the troopers, whilst the buttons were silver with the hunting horn device.

After the outbreak of the war, the issue of the new helmets (now with a blue cover) resumed, and they were supplied, though only slowly, to the 1er, 13e, 15e and 20e in January 1915. It is unlikely that many more regiments received them before they were replaced by the Adrian helmet in late 1915. From the winter of 1914–15 many units replaced their garance trousers with pairs in brown corduroy (theoretically with a line of dark blue piping down the outside seam).

This corporal wears a line of garance piping around each cuff, signifying that he had re-enlisted after his conscription term was completed.

Hussars were dressed in a similar fashion. The shako had white wool braid instead of black, and instead of the horn an Austrian knot in 3 mm wide white braid. The tunic was all sky blue with garance numbers on the collars. The buttons also had an Austrian knot on them instead of a horn. The 1914 pattern helmet was worn in the 6e Hussars only, bearing a five-pointed star for troopers and an eight-pointed one for officers in place of the horn badge.

Grey horses, still used by trumpeters in all cavalry regiments, were darkened on active service by covering their skin with a solution of potassium permanganate.



Badges of transport units, painted on the vehicles. 1 TM273 (red monkey, buff circle with black edge); 2 SS20 (red and black ladybird on white); 3 SS17 (white head with red cross and lips, yellow circle); 4 TM94 (black crow with yellow beak, black branch, light blue circle and white square); 5 TM537 (white over green flag with yellow N); 6 TMR709 (grey stone with black lettering, buff road, green landscape and blue sky with white clouds).

B3: Trooper, 16e Régiment de Dragons, France, 1914

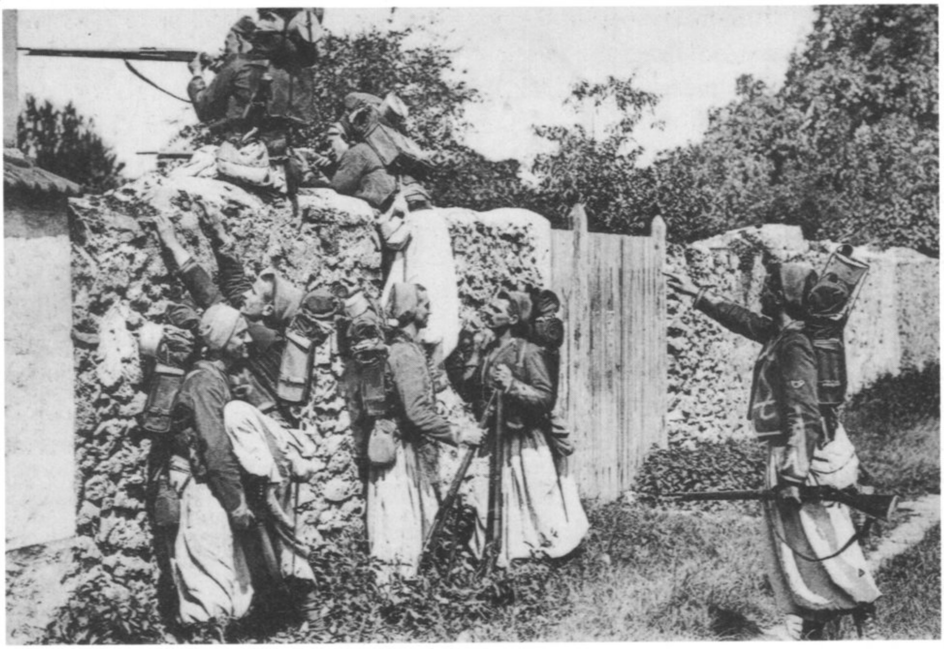
The headgear is the 1874 pattern helmet, common to cuirassiers and dragoons, in polished steel with a brass crest and a curved brass plate on the front, and brass chinscales. In peacetime, it had a short red brush plume at the front of the crest, and a cut feather plume on the left (scarlet except for musicians, who used red and white). Both the brush plume (nicknamed the marmoset) and the cut feather plume have been removed, but the falling tail at the rear has been allowed to remain. All is concealed beneath the helmet cover introduced in 1901.

The dark blue tunic is similar to that worn by the cuirassiers, but retains the colour combination introduced for the dragoons just before the Franco-Prussian War, and has braid shoulder straps rather than epaulettes.

Officers were dressed in similar fashion to the men, but wore black tunics instead of blue. The helmet had gilded fittings instead of brass; the colonel of the regiment wore a white egret plume, whilst those in regimental HQ wore a tricoloured cut feather one. They wore breeches rather than trousers, tucked into black boots and spurs. Officers' holsters were black polished leather.

C1: Pilot, Aviation Service, France, 1914

The Aviation and Balloon Services both wore uniforms based on that of the Engineers, their parent corps. As a further complication, there were two types of personnel – those who had joined the service direct, and those who had transferred from another arm of service.



A squad of zouaves on patrol. The size of the pack and associated equipment is much bulkier than that of the line infantry depicted earlier. The sergeant (on the right) wears a marksmanship badge on his left sleeve.

At the outbreak of war, those who had joined direct wore the uniform of the Engineers, like this man – with red collar patches and blue numbers for the Aviation Service. Balloons reversed these colours. All those not in possession of a pilot's brevet wore an embroidered badge half way between the right shoulder and elbow. Trade and qualification badges were worn on the left sleeve in the normal way.

Those who did have a pilot's licence, or who were part of a balloon's crew, wore a special collar badge. The pilot's badge was the number of the Aviation Group followed by a winged star; balloon pilots had the Group number and a winged cog-wheel; aircraft and balloon crew had the number and a winged disc in the appropriate colours.

When not flying, flying crew could also wear a vareuse-dolman, similar to that of the chasseurs alpins – a garment abandoned by 1916 in favour of the same vareuse as other arms. Flying kit consisted of a black leather jacket, trousers and helmet, with a dark blue brassard around the arm or around the helmet (both were abandoned in 1916). This was supplemented by private purchases of fur jackets, gloves, scarves and boots as necessary.

Personnel in the Aviation or Balloon Service who had been detached from other arms retained their old uniforms, but non-flying personnel replaced their previous collar badge with a grenade in red and either gold or silver wire, depending on the button colour of their uniform. This grenade was also worn on the képi. Additionally, they wore the appropriate badge on their right upper arm. Those who had qualified as air crew wore their badge at the collar on a patch of the colour of the uniform, or of dark blue for officers transferred from the Spahis. Officers' badges were in gold or silver wire and sequins.

A range of metal brevets was introduced in September 1916, to be worn on the left breast of the uniform jacket; this was often joined (unofficially) by the squadron badge.

C2: Maître pointeur, 4e Groupe, 54e Régiment d'Artillerie, France, 1914

This man is a gun layer for a 75 mm artillery battery attached to one of the cavalry divisions. This group was one of the few that received a metal helmet instead of the képi before the outbreak of war (the other units were two batteries of the 13e). Handed in on mobilisation, because it was not part of the wartime service dress regulations, it was re-issued later in the year. The skull of the helmet was browned steel with brass decorations.

His uniform is also unusual in that it includes the tunique. This was normally issued only to senior NCOs, but had also been distributed to all ranks of those units which had received the new helmet. He has also been issued with a cavalry greatcoat since, as a gunner of a unit attached to a cavalry division, he counted as mounted personnel – it is worn rolled up over one shoulder. Likewise as a mounted man, he wears leggings rather than gaiters, with natural leather equipment. (N.B. NCOs, trumpeters and drivers of field and heavy artillery, drivers, gunners, craftsmen, medical orderlies and stretcher bearers of regiments attached to cavalry divisions, and all farriers counted as mounted, everyone else as non-mounted).

The more usual uniform jacket for soldiers was a dark blue veste, rather shorter than that issued to the infantry, closed by nine tombak buttons. The collar patches were scarlet with blue figures, except for workmen (*ouvriers*) who wore the reverse.

Non-mounted personnel carried the capote over the left shoulder (both capote and manteau were in dark blue cloth until the outbreak of war, when they were slowly replaced by the standard iron-grey, *gris de fer bleuté*). They wore ordinary trousers, infantry gaiters and boots, and their equipment was in black leather. Collar patches were the sole item that distinguished between the different branches.

Mounted men wore their water-bottle slung over the right shoulder, and their haversack over the same shoulder or hung from the saddle; non-mounted men wore theirs on the left. Mounted men were equipped with a revolver, worn in a holster attached to a strap over the left shoulder, and sometimes with a sabre as well; the non-mounted with an 1892 pattern carbine and two cartridge pouches on the waistbelt.

The pre-war uniform remained regulation until the introduction of horizon blue in 1915 (the double scarlet stripe on trousers and breeches was abolished in December 1914), but it is likely that artillery regiments were given all kinds of clothing to use up, since priority for horizon blue clothing was given to those in the trenches, to the detriment of those behind the lines. Trousers, and even vestes, of blue or brown corduroy may have been issued. A brief issue was made of pre-war steel helmets, with a comb taken off the Adrian helmet, painted in horizon blue with a brass badge and edge to the peak, but they were soon replaced by the Adrian proper.

The uniform of the Artillery Staff, who were responsible for the manufacture of guns and limbers, were those of their parent arm, but with a gold grenade at the collar.

C3: Maréchal de logis, 19e Escadron du Train, France, 1914

The uniforms of the Train were based on those of the artillery, but in iron grey (actually it was a deep bluish shade, close to the colour of infantry greatcoats) and garance, with white metal buttons and braid. Officers and senior NCOs wore tunics of an even darker shade than the men, almost black. Train personnel counted as mounted.

Table E: Arm-of-service distinctions on the horizon blue/kahaki uniform
2 – African and Colonial troops

	Trouser piping	*Collar patch*	*Soutaches*	*Regimental number*
Zouaves	yellow[1]	khaki[3]	garance	garance
Tirailleurs algériens	yellow	khaki[3]	sky blue	sky blue
Tirailleurs marocains	yellow[1]	khaki[3]	green	green & five-pointed star
R.M.Z.T.	yellow[1]	khaki	sky blue/garance[2]	light blue
Inf. Lég. d'Afrique	yellow	khaki	none	violet
Légion Etrangère	yellow	yellow[3]	green	green
Chasseurs d'Afrique	dark blue	dark blue	yellow	yellow
Spahis	dark blue	dark blue	yellow	yellow
Colonial Infantry	yellow[1,4]	yellow[3]	red	red/anchor
Tirailleurs	yellow[1,4]	khaki	yellow	yellow anchor
Colonial artillery	scarlet[4]	khaki	scarlet	blue anchor

Notes
Officers' numbers were in the button colour
R.M.Z. T. = *Régiment mixte de zouaves et tirailleurs*
1 yellow piping only on 'Russian breeches'; there was no piping on other patterns
2 the sky blue line was nearest the regimental number
3 yellow (to April 1915) or horizon blue on horizon blue uniforms, but khaki on khaki uniforms
4 in theory, replaced by sky blue from 30th October 1918

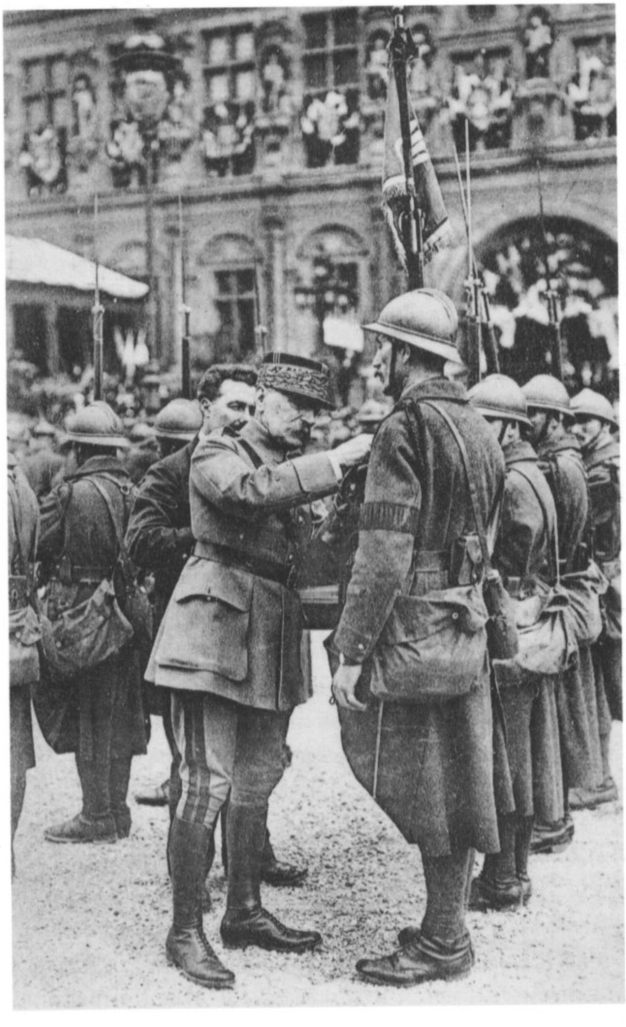
D1: Private, 15e Régiment d'Infanterie, France, 1915

The man illustrated demonstrates the attempts made both to simplify pre-war garments for mass production, and to make them less visible. The képi is a simplified version, in what was officially called bluish grey, which covered a number of shades, depending on the cloth's country of origin – France, Great Britain, Spain or the USA. The regimental number was cut from similar cloth, and placed on a red rectangle (or the figures were taken off an 1884 képi and re-sewn onto the new type). The original greatcoat was replaced by this simplified pattern, which was single- rather than double-breasted, fastened by six large brass buttons (later covered in cloth or replaced by patterns made from horn or ivory nut wood). The collar was stand-and-fall rather than stiff and upright, and a breast pocket was added on either side, fastened with a button. A number of variants were produced in November and December 1914, omitting either the left pocket or both. All patterns had the collar patch with the regimental number, often transferred from the old pattern coats, but were later modified into simple rectangles. The skirts were usually worn buttoned back, though after the first few months of the war, some regiments wore the skirts free, so that they hid the red trousers. This man has had his red trousers replaced by a pair in corduroy, and the leather gaiters replaced by puttees (regulation from October 1914).

D2: Private, 1er Régiment Etranger, France, 1915

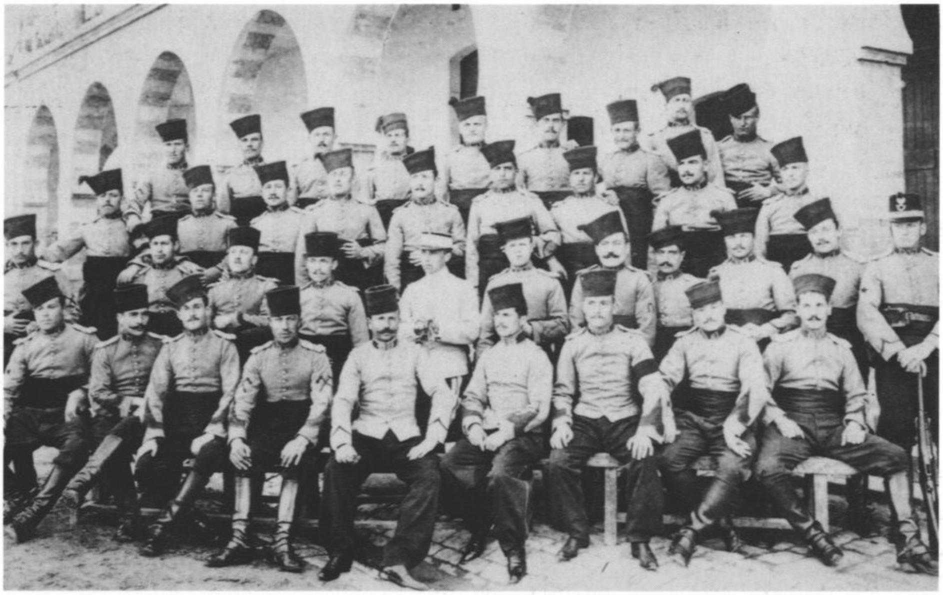
The Legion were dressed as the line infantry, but for several details. Serving in the European theatre, the Legion was initially re-equipped with the one-litre water-bottle, in place of the two-litre version used in Africa. A blue cummerbund was worn around the waist, but generally under the greatcoat, and so was rarely seen. Troops in France retained the number of their parent regiment on uniform items. These regiments were initially treated as metropolitan infantry, and reclothed in the new horizon blue uniforms in 1915, but they later converted to khaki. The helmet device was the infantry grenade. Rank badges and service chevrons were worn in green, rather than regulation red.

Legion units on other fronts retained the 1903 pattern sand coloured cotton uniform that was used in North Africa. This was a simple tunic with six brass buttons, a stand collar, with red scalloped patches and blue numbers, and two pockets with flaps in the skirts. The trousers were of the same cut as that of the line infantry, but again in sand coloured cotton. They may have been worn with gaiters, although blue or grey puttees seem more likely. Headgear was the képi, or the 1905 pattern colonial helmet with a sand coloured cover. These units may have converted to khaki uniforms in 1916.

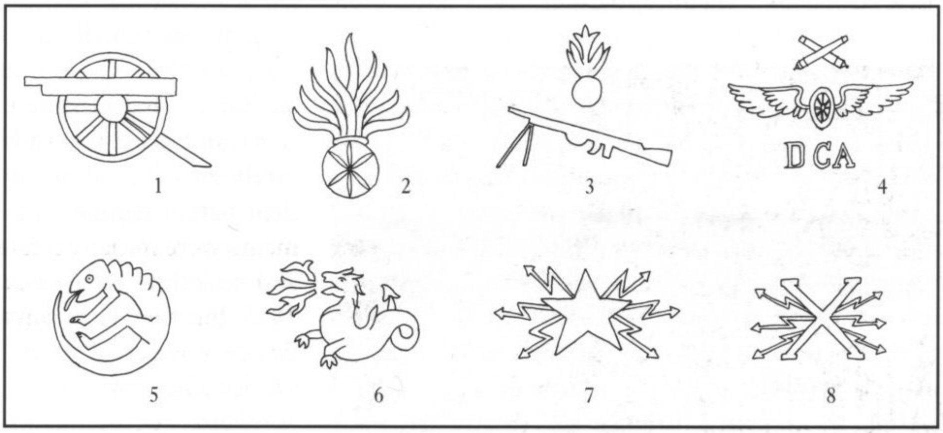


Marshal Foch presents a medal to an Algerian tirailleur at the Victory celebrations of 1919 (note the crescent on the finial of the fanion, and the hand of Fatima device on the fanion itself).

A group of chasseurs d'Afrique of the 4e. All are wearing the chéchia, except the man on the extreme right, who wears the taconnet. Note the much lighter tunic of the officer in the centre.



Below: Trade and specialisation badges. They were generally worn in the same colour as rank badges in 1914, with those of NCOs in the button colour. On the horizon blue and khaki uniforms, they were embroidered in the same colour as that of the soutaches of the collar patch, but from mid 1916, in dark blue or dark brown respectively. 1 37 mm gun crew (infantry); 2 bomber (infantry) armourer (aviation), aiming prize badge (artillery); 3 Chauchat team; 4 anti-aircraft artillery (the winged wheel was a non-regulation addition); 5 camouflage troops (artillery); 6 tanks; 7 telegraph operator/telephonist; 8 X-ray machine operator.



D3: Fusilier-marin, France, 1915

The uniform was the standard Navy issue, with a rating's cap, and a cap tally with the appropriate number and 'Régiment de Fusiliers-Marins'. A white chin strap was worn across the top of the cap in full dress, but was often detached in the trenches. Petty and commissioned officers wore a blue peaked cap, with a gold anchor on the front, and rank indicated by narrow strips of gold braid (flag officers had rows of oak leaf embroidery, and between one and three silver stars, according to rank, placed over the cap badge).

Sailors appear to have retained the jumper (at least for off-duty wear), worn over a striped shirt, and regulation trousers. Initially these were worn in leather gaiters, but the latter were replaced by dark blue puttees. Army infantry greatcoats were worn (probably without the jumper), with the rating badge of crossed anchors on the upper right sleeve, and any other speciality badge on the left. After the change to horizon blue in the Army, puttees and greatcoats of this shade were certainly worn by naval personnel, but they appear to have retained their navy uniform as much as possible throughout the war. There does not appear to have been any use of army-style collar patches on the greatcoat. Infantry equipment was carried. Adrian helmets, when they were issued, had an anchor badge.

E1: Corporal, 137e Régiment d'Infanterie, Verdun, 1916

This man wears the new horizon blue uniform. The collar patches of the capote display the regimental number, and in theory a small disc indicating whether the wearer belonged to the first, second or third battalion – in dark blue, garance, or jonquil respectively (often omitted).

The khaki covers introduced to cut down reflection had to be abandoned, because muddy covers were being carried into head wounds, and a matt horizon blue paint was adopted.

The stripes on the left arm were for service in the Zone of the Armies (most of northern and eastern France), introduced in April 1916, one stripe for every six months' service. In the background is a stretcher bearer from a territorial regiment. They were largely employed on lines of communications duties, at least at first, but increasing numbers did serve at the Front, either in Territorial Divisions, or attached to regular formations. They were generally uniformed as the active and reserve regiments, but the figures of the regimental number on the képi, greatcoat and veste were white instead of garance. He is using a one man trolley introduced in 1898 for the evacuation of wounded. Although fine on even surfaces, it was to prove useless for evacuating wounded over No Man's Land. To compensate him for the extra load, he is armed only with a pistol, and not with a rifle. One common feature of the uniforms of these regiments was the omission of the collar patch from the capote, possibly because of the high visibility of the white numbers.

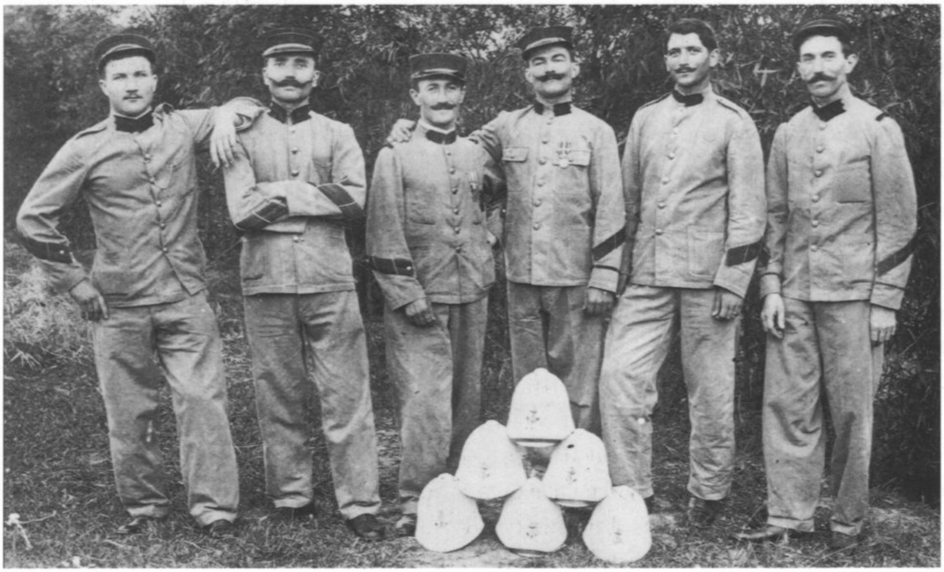
French medical units were frequently overwhelmed by the sheer quantity of casualties – according to Horne, this may have cost them the equivalent of an army corps. Prepared only for a short, sharp aseptic war, and medically ill-equipped, they were grossly inadequate for the scale of the conflict.

E2: Private, 1er Régiment de Marche de Tirailleurs Algériens, France, 1916

The original uniform of the tirailleurs was similar to that of the zouaves, but in different colours. The chéchia was red with a light blue tassel, to which was later added a light blue cloth cover. The jacket was light blue with yellow braid, with tombos in garance, white, jonquil yellow and light blue respectively. The sleeveless vest was in the same light blue colour, also edged with yellow braid; the cummerbund was red. The sarouels were in white cotton or in heavier weight light blue cloth with yellow piping. Equipment was similar to that of the zouaves.

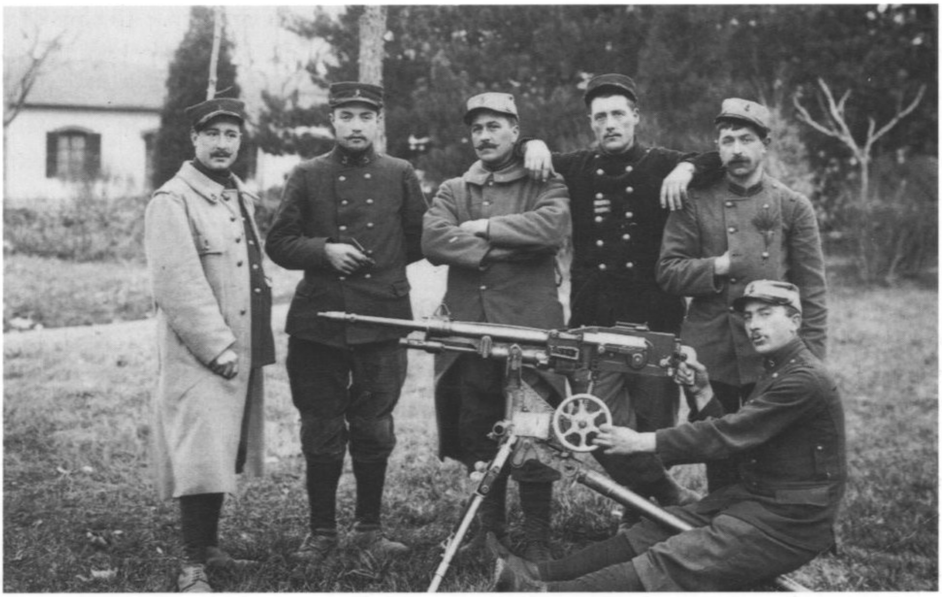
The man here is in the final style of the khaki uniform, and in assault order. The style of the vareuse, here worn for once without the greatcoat, is similar to that of French regiments. The wide trousers have been replaced by culottes russes, piped in yellow. The steel helmets were painted horizon blue at first, then khaki. The reduced assault order consists of the waistbelt and ammo pouches, gas mask, water bottle, and a blanket over one shoulder.

The 1er RMTA was composed of regular battalions from the 1er and 8e and a newly-raised battalion from the 2e.



A group of NCOs of Colonial Infantry in the sand coloured cotton uniform. Their stripes are held on by loops of thread.

Men of the 5e Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale in early 1915. Four wear the double breasted paletot, one is in corduroy. The gun is the 1907 St Etienne.



E3: Captain, 5e Régiment de Cuirassiers à Pied, France, 1916

In 1914, cuirassiers wore a uniform basically similar to that of the dragoons. The tunique was provided with epaulettes in peacetime, but these were abandoned at mobilisation. Over this was worn the 1860 pattern padded waistcoat of uncoloured canvas, with red edges that protruded beyond the edge of the cuirass. The cuirass itself was of the 1854 or 1855 pattern, modified in 1891. It was steel, with brass shoulder chains on a leather backing, and a black leather strap across the front. It was not worn by trumpeters or musicians.

It was obvious that the highly polished helmet and cuirass were just made for enemy marksmen (an attempt to abolish the cuirass in the 1880s, like so much else, had foundered on sentiment) and measures were taken in the first few weeks of the war to counter this. Most regiments ceased to polish them; the colonel of one of the regiments in the Tours garrison (either the 5e or 8e) had them all placed in the barracks courtyard, and told the men to relieve themselves on them, in an effort to remove the shine from them quickly! A cover, in blue cloth, was introduced but not officially until January 1915. Some regiments, from photographic evidence, appear to have abandoned the cuirass altogether (although this measure did not become official until October 1915). The brush plume was removed from most regiments' helmets, and the helmet disappeared under a blue or pale khaki cover. All pre-war helmets were withdrawn from these, and other cavalry regiments, in favour of the Adrian helmet, in October 1915.

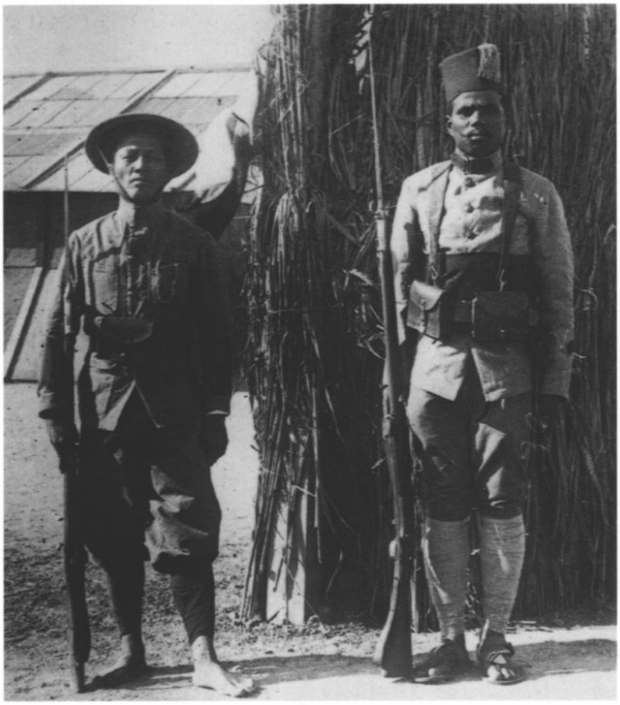
Officers, as in the dragoons, were dressed similarly to the men, but wore black instead of dark blue, and had plated helmets.

The uniform of the cuirassiers à pied was basically the same as that of the mounted branch, but the cuirass was abandoned and the cavalry greatcoat modified to help marching (when not worn, it was carried rolled-up, bandolier style, over the shoulder). The leggings were sometimes replaced by puttees. A special helmet was provided from 1916; this consisted of the old helmet with the crest removed and replaced by the comb from an Adrian helmet.

Despite serving on foot in the trenches, this officer retains his old helmet, minus the crest, and his cavalry greatcoat. He still wears his cuirassier collar patches, but these were to be altered by the addition of a third, yellow, strip of braid in 1917–18. He wears his M2 gas mask at the ready.

F1: Lieutenant, 176e Régiment d'Infanterie, Salonika, 1916

The regiments in Salonika were those which had been evacuated from Gallipoli. This officer wears a vareuse typical of the transitional uniforms of 1915, but with the unusual feature of the regimental number in separate brass figures, rather than on a



A tirailleur annamite and a tirailleur malgache in Salonika, 1917. They both wear the cotton uniform with their own regimental distinctions. (IWM)

sewn patch. He wears the 1886 tropical helmet, issued in the Dardanelles, which continued to be worn for a time in Macedonia.

F2: Trumpeter, 1er Régiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique, Salonika, 1917

The chasseurs d'Afrique wore a European-style uniform. Their headgear was referred to officially as a cap (*casquette*), and unofficially as a *taconnet*, after the original manufacturer – unique to this branch, it was similar to the shako used by the metropolitan light cavalry. It was coloured as a képi, however, with a red body and a sky blue band, yellow piping, and the hunting horn (above the band for troopers, on the band for officers), cockade and pompon on the front. A white cover was introduced before the war. The undress item was a red chéchia with a tassel in squadron colours.

The uniform jacket was a short sky blue veste, with a jonquil yellow collar and yellow chevron braid on the cuffs, and nine plain tin hemispherical buttons down the front. The collar patches were sky blue with the regimental number cut out of jonquil yellow cloth. On each shoulder was a white braid shoulder strap similar to that of the metropolitan regiments, held in place by a sky blue strap. Around the waist was a wide red cummerbund, often folded up on the right hand side, to show a striped pattern.

The regiments went into khaki in 1915–16. This man still wears the taconnet in its cover, a more common occurrence in Macedonia than in France, where Adrian helmets were the norm. It continues to carry the squadron pompon on the front, in this case that of the First Squadron. Musician's braid, which went around the collar of the 1914 uniforms, was reduced to this small strip on the cuffs.

F3: Trooper, 4e Régiment de Marche de Spahis Marocains, Salonika, 1917

French officers of the spahi regiments were dressed as other regiments of light cavalry, but in reversed colours of red jacket and light blue breeches, and with natural leather boots and equipment. Native officers wore a garance short jacket, but a sky blue sédria; their crimson cloak (*burnous*) was decorated in black silk braid, and there was a sky blue piece on the chest.

French and native other ranks were dressed in the same fashion. The jacket was garance with black braid, and the sédria and sarouel sky blue with black braid. The tombo was garance, white, jonquil yellow and sky blue for the four squadrons respectively. Over this was worn a white burnous, and over that a second, garance, burnous. Around the waist was a crimson cummerbund. Headgear was a white turban in white cotton (striped in blue for NCOs), or a crimson chéchia with a blue tassel (no tassel for natives). Instead of a turban, natives wore a more upright white haïck held in place by a brown camel hair cord.

All leather work for natives of all ranks and French other ranks was in natural morocco leather, frequently with decorations stamped on. Natives wore their own pattern of boots, which were made of softer leather in the leg than the French pattern.

The gaudy scarlet and blue uniforms were soon abandoned, and replaced by that seen here. The haïck has been replaced by the undress chéchia, the collarless jacket by a vareuse and a long overshirt (*gandourah*), all in the same cotton material. The equipment consists of the 1903 pattern equipment for Saharan units, with small pouches on belt and braces, each holding a three-round clip for the 1892 carbine. The bayonet is also carried on the braces, rather than on the belt. The leggings and boots, whilst still in natural leather, are the same as for the rest of the Army.

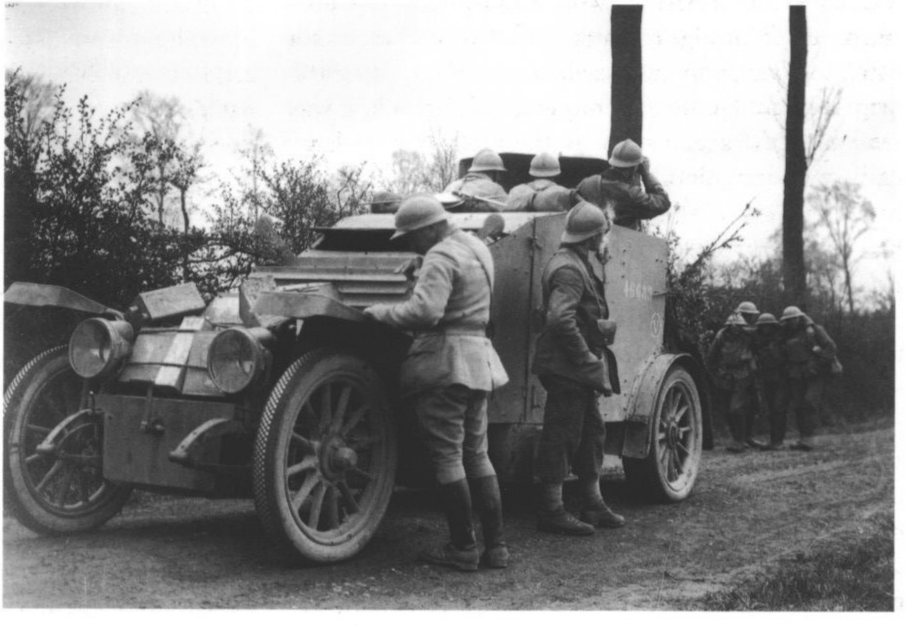
F4: Private, Tirailleurs Sénégalais, France, 1918

Senegalese troops brought over from Morocco at the outbreak of war were partially re-equipped on landing in France. The headgear remained the pre-war red chéchia with a light blue tassel (and later with a blue cover). They also received a line infantry greatcoat, but with Colonial buttons. Since the Senegalese did not like upright collars, this was further modified in service by turning down the collars, and by the start of 1915, replacing them with a wide stand-and-fall collar. It was worn over the 1898 pattern dark blue collarless jacket, with a line of yellow braid around the neck, and in a chevron on the cuffs. It was fastened with four hemispherical tombak buttons. At the front point of the jacket were blue collar patches with TS in scarlet. Around the waist of the jacket was a red cummerbund, worn under the greatcoat. Trousers were dark blue with yellow outside piping, worn with dark blue puttees and black boots. Individual equipment was as per other regiments, but instead of a pack, all personal effects were carried in the *barda sénégalais*, a roll of cloth, probably of a tent section, which was carried bandolier-fashion across one shoulder. An additional item was a machete worn in a leather scabbard on the right hand side of the waistbelt, at the front.

The battalions in France in 1914 were withdrawn from the line in early 1915, and re-embarked for Gallipoli. Here they appear to have reverted to their sand coloured cotton uniform. This consisted of a jacket and trousers in the same style as the dark blue uniform detailed above, and was worn with dark blue puttees. A sand coloured chéchia cover was also issued. This was later replaced by the khaki uniform seen here, consisting of a double breasted *paletot* and trousers.

Battalions newly arrived in France in 1915 were at first clothed in horizon blue, but with the vareuse instead of the paletot. These were superseded by this khaki version by spring 1916. Both horizon blue and khaki versions bore the anchor and braid. The scarification suggests that this man is a Dahomean.

The tirailleurs malgaches wore a uniform similar to that of the Senegalese, but the collar patches, when worn, read TM instead. The Indochinese tirailleurs annamites and tirailleurs tonkinois wore a similar style of jacket, but it had a narrow line of braid, of the same colour as the uniform, at each buttonhole across the chest (*kéo*); the headgear was the *salacco*, a conical cap made from bamboo cane, usually worn within a khaki cover. All these units adopted the same khaki uniform as the Senegalese as a winter uniform.



An armoured car in action, supporting British troops, 1918. The branch sleeve badge was the crossed barrels and grenade of all heavy machine gunners, with the letters AM. (IWM)

G1: General, France, 1917

French general officers continued to wear a plain uniform after the introduction of horizon blue. The stars on the arms remained the badge of rank; these were repeated on the front of the képi (although the pre-war version continued to be worn), or on the helmet.

G2: Staff officer, France, 1916

Officers of the General Staff wore the uniform of their parent regiment, but with the regimental number replaced by a stylised winged thunderbolt in their button colour. Such officers usually wore brassards in various colours on the left arm to denote their posting (in this case, on the staff of an infantry division). They were made of silk, and piped on top and bottom with gold thread, and were fastened by a leather or cloth strap with a metal buckle under the arm. The devices were embroidered in metallic thread.

G3: Driver, Service Automobile, France, 1916

In 1914, staff car drivers wore the uniform of General Staff clerks, whilst truck drivers wore that of the Train, both with the appropriate brassard.

After the change to horizon blue, all drivers wore the uniform of the Train, but with a garance letter A instead of the squadron number on the collar patch. Officers, however, initially wore the uniform of the arm from which they were detached. They changed to that of the Train in 1915, but their collar badge was a grenade in gold wire, with the letter A on the ball. In April 1918, they adopted a black képi with gold braid and grenade. Mechanics had a set of blue canvas overalls, worn with clogs. Drivers were issued with a wide variety of fur coats and gloves during winter. Women drivers wore a vareuse, bonnet de police and skirt with puttees, all in réséda green.

H1: Private, 177e Régiment d'Artillerie, France, 1918

Four regiments of artillery – 176e to 179e – were converted into regiments of trench artillery. They were distinguished from other regiments of field artillery only by the badge on the left sleeve, depicting a mortar bomb.

All pre-war soldiers had been issued with a white canvas working dress, but this disappeared after the outbreak of hostilities. Gradually, a horizon blue version was introduced as replacement. It was rarely seen in the line, although it was considered suitable dress for gunners serving their pieces. Repeated washings and the effect of exposure to the elements saw the colour gradually fade away, until these garments were almost as white as the pre-war version.

H2: Private, Artillerie Spéciale, France, 1918

The members of tank units wore the basic uniform of the artillery, but with their own distinctions, namely the collar patches and the beret. This was 'pyrenean', that is, quite small, in comparison to the large 'alpine' version. There was no official branch badge until September 1917. When introduced, this consisted of crossed cannon barrels, with a knight's helmet superimposed in the centre, in white metal. It could be found on the beret or embroidered onto the sleeve of the vareuse. Before the adoption of that badge, various unofficial items were worn. The most popular was a salamander breathing flames, in metal or embroidered, again on sleeve or beret. Another item was an embroidered playing card symbol – a spade for the 1st Battery, a heart for the 2nd, a diamond for the 3rd and a club for the 4th. These could be found with or without the letters AS. The origin of this device lies in a pun on the abbreviation of Artillerie Spéciale and the word *as* for an ace in cards. The leather coat with its cloth collar was adapted from that worn by the Service Automobile. Steel helmets, when worn, bore the badge either of the Artillery or that mentioned above. Some use was also made of chain mail protecting masks of British pattern inside the tank.

H3: Private, Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc, France, 1918

The peacetime uniform of those Colonial regiments stationed in France was virtually identical to that of the line infantry, except that the uniform jacket was a double breasted version called a paletot. It had a blue collar with a red anchor, and red piping around the cuffs, but no flap. There was nothing to indicate the regiment. The buttons were brass, stamped with an anchor. Regiments serving abroad wore a uniform of sand coloured cotton, with a colonial helmet in a white or khaki cover, and a brass anchor on the front. European Colonial regiments went into horizon blue from 1915; from May 1918, they were authorised to

A group of fusiliers-marins display their trophies. They are still wearing the cap tallies of their ships, the destroyer Branlebas, *and the auxiliary cruiser* Calédonien.

change to khaki – but few units had received this by the Armistice.

The man here is wearing a version of assault order. His unit having no regimental number, the collar badge is simply an anchor. The RICM was the most highly decorated unit in the Army, with ten citations (the RMLE had nine). The red fourragère was awarded for the recapture of Fort Douaumont at Verdun in 1916. His equipment is that of a VB rifle grenadier; the grenade cup was kept in a belt pouch, and the grenades in the large pouch on the left hip.

The uniform of Colonial artillery regiments was exactly the same as that of the metropolitan regiments, except that the regimental number on the latter's collar was replaced by an anchor, and on the front of the képi was a red grenade.

Colonial supply officers wore the uniform of the Colonial infantry, but with a gold five-pointed star on the collar and on the front of the képi. This was encircled by an oak and laurel wreath on the helmet. Colonial medical personnel also wore the same as the Colonial infantry, but with their distinctive badge of a caduceus on the collar only, and the anchor on the képi. Administrators of the Medical Service wore a ten-pointed star as their collar badge, and on the képi and helmet, the same star within an oak and laurel wreath.

Further reading

There is no balanced account in English of the French Army during the whole of the First World War. Of individual studies, Alistair Horne's trilogy on Franco-German rivalry, particularly *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916* (1962), has few equals; on the mutinies of 1917, E.M. Watt's *Dare Call it Treason* (1963) remains the best, although it should be read in conjunction with French work, such as G. Pédroncini's *Les mutineries de 1917* (1967). The remarks that both English works make upon the Army of 1914 need revision in the light of Douglas Porch's *The March to the Marne* (1981), whose account is superior to both. The memoirs of many leading participants were translated into English during the 1920s and 1930s – they can reveal some detail, as long as the essentially self-serving nature of many of them is taken into account. It is advisable not to believe anything about Pétain 'written either in the heat of the First War or in the heat of the Second' (Horne). Amongst French works, the 95-volume official history *Les armées françaises dans la Grande Guerre* remains as the starting point; one might also mention General Palat's *La Grande Guerre sur le Front Occidental* (1925), J. Meyer's *La vie quotidienne des soldats pendant la Grande Guerre* (1966) and J.N. Cru's *Témoins* (1929); and the novel *Le Feu* (published in English as *Under Fire*) by Henri Barbusse (1926). The *Revue historique des armées* continues to publish valuable articles on the history of all three services; as do *Neptunia* and *Icare* for naval and aviation history. Those interested in 'the last gaiter button' should consult the various volumes of *Les uniformes de l'armée française 1872–1914* by Galot and Robert, and the ever informative French magazine *Militaria*.